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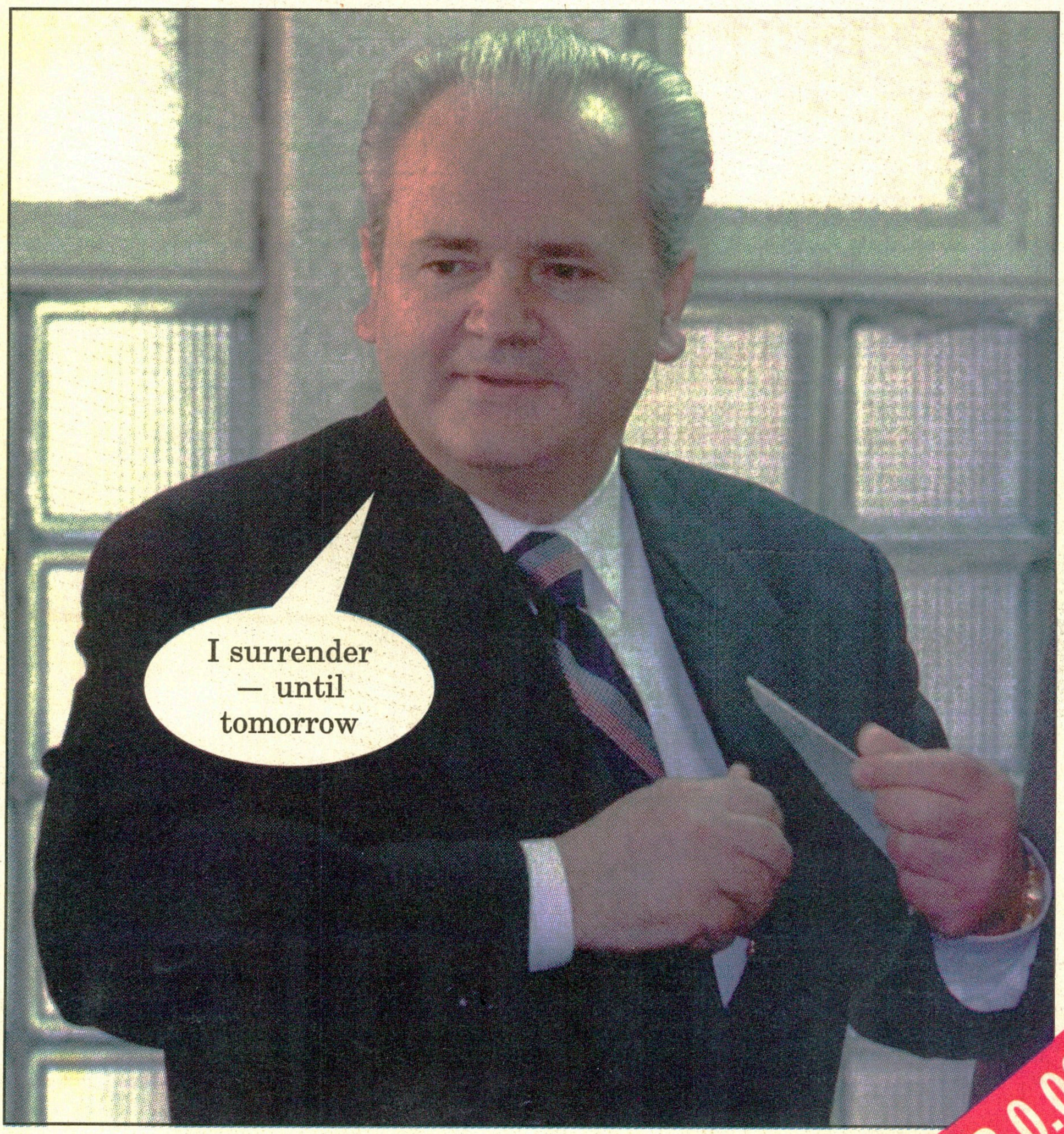


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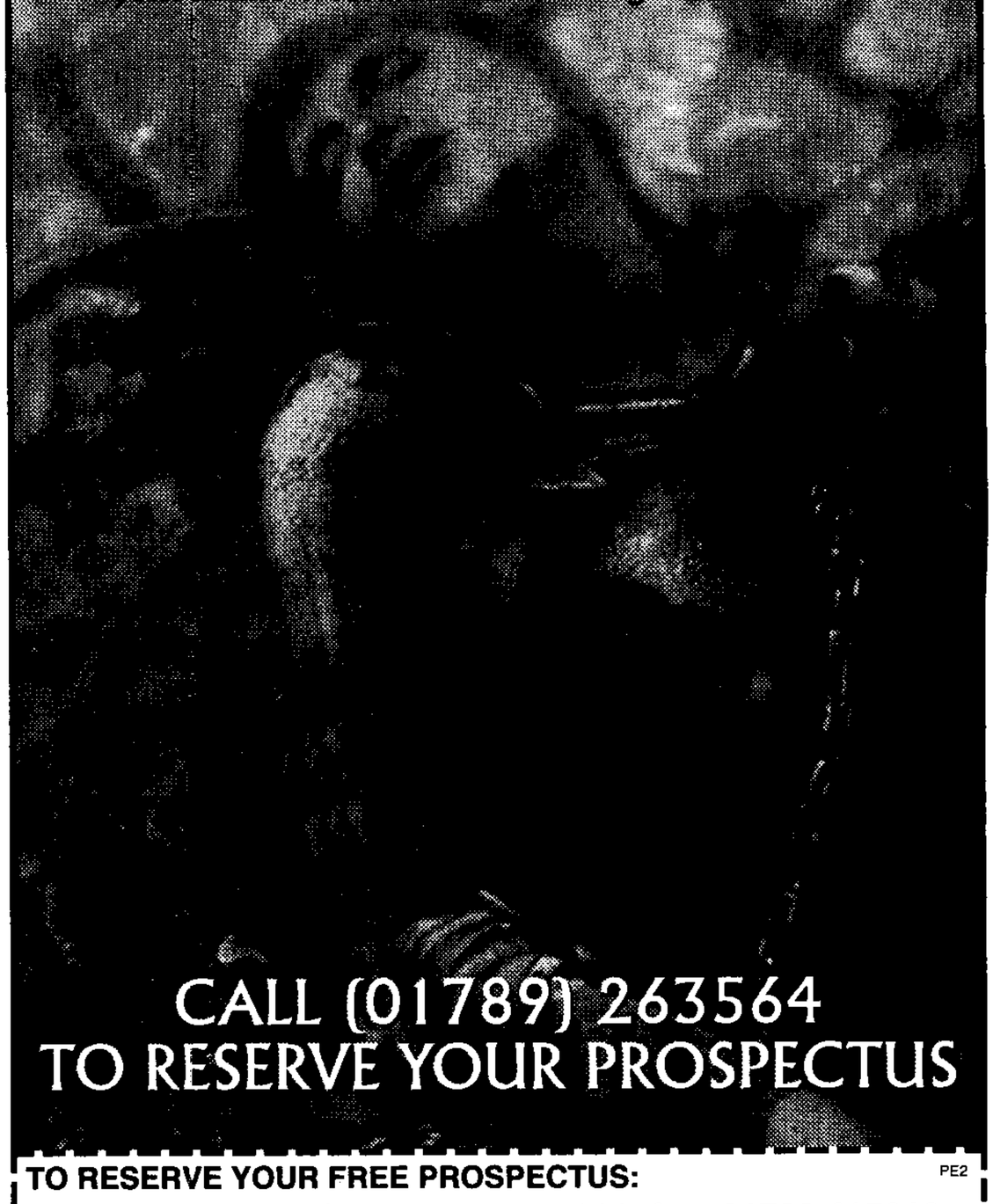

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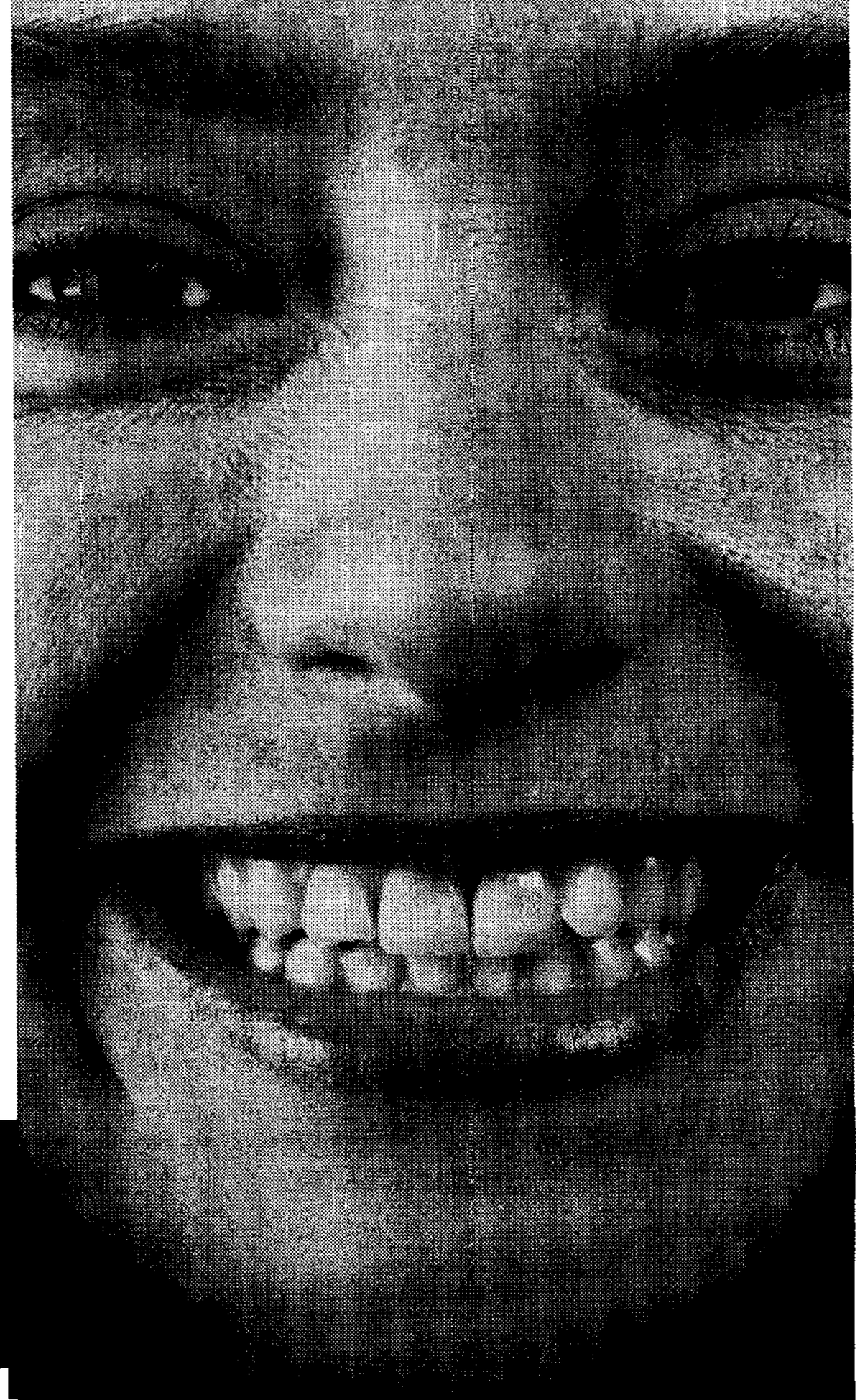

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Sarah Bates, First Direct Customer since 1995

# Gnome

UNLIKE other armchair commentators, the Daily Gnome has been proved to be 100% vindicated by the events in Kosovo in the last week.

At the outset of the war we made our position clear with our now famous front page headline: "Should we go in? – You decide."

We stuck firmly to this view throughout the conflict, through all the ups and downs of the Balkan Crisis. We supported the government when things were going well, but we were never afraid to criticise them when they made mistakes. We weighed in with such classic headlines as "Ground Troops – You Decide", "Did Nato Blunder? You Tell Us" and "Is This Peace? Join Our Phone Poll Now".

When history is written, the contribution of the Daily Gnome will stand out for its courage and conviction.

Yes, we had a good war. Now let's get back to the central issues of peace that really matter.

E. Strobes
pp Lord Gnome.

## On Other Pages


- Liz Hurley's Builder
- Sophie Rhys-Jones's Knockers
- Patsy Kensit's Bun-In-The-Oven

*"I can't decide which party I won't bother to vote for"*


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# COLOUR SECTION

**LET no one accuse the government of not being prepared to answer its critics over the war in Yugoslavia.**

Last Saturday deputy prime minister John Prescott engaged in a frank discussion of the issues surrounding the Nato campaign with a group of anti-war demonstrators on their way to the march in London, in an impromptu debate outside a motorway service station near Leicester.

As Prescott pointed out, it is an unhappy truth that situations sometimes arise where the threat of force is necessary – as he was happy to demonstrate, telling one of his more vocal opponents that "I'll push you through the window".

## Number crunchings

**72** DAYS of bombing before a peace deal was agreed

**72** HOURS of negotiation before it broke down

**TONY BLAIR has ordered Jack "the Enforcer" Cunningham to bang old and new Labour heads together over the embarrassing issue of Railtrack's massive pre-tax £428m profits.**

"Old" Labour deputy prime minister John Prescott wants to force Railtrack to improve its service by investing in the system, rather than in its shareholders. His plan is to make the £1bn of taxpayers' subsidy, supposed to ensure our trains run on time, conditional on guaranteed government-ordered investment programmes.

Rail regulator Chris Bolt has apparently suggested that this could be achieved by giving the new strategic rail authority the power to pay the subsidy direct to Railtrack and order where the money is spent. This would end the current system inherited from the Tories where the subsidy is paid to the train operators, who then pass it on to Railtrack in return for improvements to their services.

However, "new" Labour chancellor Gordon Brown is afraid of upsetting his friends in private industry. Railtrack is making loud noises that Prescott's plans would send share prices tumbling, raise the cost of capital and get nothing built.

Now the issue is threatening a huge cabinet rift – Labour in opposition was of course opposed to privatising the rail system. So Blair is calling in Cunningham with a view to reaching some sort of compromise that will please both the legions of long-suffering commuters angry at Railtrack's fat cattery and keep industry on message.

**THE new proportional representation system introduced for this week's Euro-elections is as complicated as it is deeply uninteresting.**

Even the parties fighting the election do not seem to understand it, judging by Labour's campaign leaflet distributed to every household in London.

"There's no need for tactical voting – you simply vote for what you believe in," it reads. Directly above this message is a bar chart showing party support at the last (first-past-the-post) general election, accompanied by the bleak message "A vote for the Lib Dems could mean more Tories being elected. The choice is clear. Vote Labour if you want to beat the Tories".

**"*MAIL* leads the way in banning paparazzi pictures", was the headline on 8 September 1997. But the beefed-up codes of conduct and tearstained editorials all contained one unwritten clause – obviously, all restrictions would go out of the window in the wake of a major news event such as Patsy Kensit becoming pregnant.**

And so it was that the *Mail* printed two grainy, long distance shots of the slightly plump Patsy on page three last Monday, her "togetherness" with husband Liam Gallagher strangely reminiscent of those beach shots of Di 'n' Dodi that set the whole thing off in the first place.

Not that this was a gratuitous intrusion by the filthy paparazzi of course – on the contrary. It was part of a serious investigation of the "dilemma faced by every mother-to-be: whether to be openly proud of your ever-expanding tummy, or to stage a discreet cover-up".

It was therefore essential to point out that Kensit, on a beach in Majorca, chose to wear a bikini, whereas Viscountess Linley, in a restaurant in London, opted to wear some clothes.

## IN THE BACK

### NEWS SECTION pages 26 & 27


- *Cocaine, Murdoch and a sniff of hypocrisy* 6
- *Cassius on those important Euro-electionszzzz* 8
- *Aitken: Missing millions and a missing missus* 9

# Street Of Shame

**NEWS *of the Screws* editor Phil Hall may come to regret his promise, after the Dallaglio affair, that any of his staff who had ever used drugs would certainly be sacked. Since then Wapping has been inundated with helpful tip-offs from rivals.**

"I used to work in the advertising sales industry, where cocaine use is rife, selling advertising for one of your national competitors," one wrote last week. "I feel it would be quite within my rights to 'out' existing members of News International's sales team who I know personally and know to use the drug on a regular basis... The hypocritical attitude of your company is offensive and if you feel beyond reproach on this issue then why don't you test every employee and publish the results in your organ?"

Fortunately Hall's insistence that his employees must have no blot or blemish on their character doesn't apply to other Wapping rags. The *Sunset Times* has for many years published contributions from convicted drug-smuggler Taki Takealotofcoke-upthenos.

And things are no better at the *Currant Bun* under editor David "Two Sorries" Yelland. In *Eye* 976 we revealed the fall from grace of the Setting *Sun*'s former music hack Tara Clancy, who wed four illegal immigrants at £1,500 a go to feed her crack cocaine habit, bringing a fresh perspective to the traditional white wedding.

Not for Yelland the boast made by straight-down-the-line Hall on RTE Radio lunchtime news last Monday that he would not employ anyone who had ever used cocaine.

Meanwhile, if Hall really is looking for further miscreants, perhaps he should delve into the record of Matthew Freud, the millionaire PR man who keeps Wapping supplied with harmless celebrity titbits.

Back in the 1980s Freud was fined £500 and described by a judge as "a very foolish young man" after being convicted of having 3.19 grams of "a powder containing cocaine" for sale. The reason for the curious phraseology, according to Freud's then girlfriend Marina Baker, was that he had cut the cocaine with vitamin C powder – a sign of the commercial acumen that has stood him in good stead ever since.

However, unlike that other foolish young PR man Tom Parker-Bowles, Freud is probably safe from the *Screws*'s entrapment squad – not least because he recently left his wife and two children to shack up with one Elisabeth Murdoch, the Digger's daughter.

**WHAT drives Mazher Mahmood, the legendary *News of the Screws* hack who specialises in disguising himself as an Arab prince and persuading gullible celebs to admit that they have taken drugs?**

After Mahmood's entrapment techniques were denounced from the dock during the recent trial of TV star John Alford, the *Screws* insisted that its chief investigator was a high-minded crusader dedicated to "exposing callous villains". But a rather different slant on his motivation can be found in the newly published diaries of former Tory MP Gyles Brandreth, who worked with "Maz" at TV-am back in the 1980s.

On 12 May 1994, Mahmood rings to warn Brandreth that the *Sunday People* is planning to run a piece about the MP's alleged visit to a massage parlour in Chester. "We wondered if you'd like to talk to us first, put your side of the story."

Brandreth is mystified. "I told him that I simply didn't believe any newspaper would run a story about me 'visiting a massage parlour' because I had never done so – in Chester or anywhere else. I said, 'This is a non-story that shouldn't be dignified with comment of any kind.'"

When Mahmood continues to badger him, Brandreth asks why he is wasting his talents in this ghastly way.

Does Maz reply with a pious lecture on the need for fearless hacks to run bogus stories about massage parlours? Er, no. All the *Screws* man can offer by way of explanation is a brief whimper: "I've got a mortgage..."

**WITHOUT a trace of self-interest, last Thursday's *Mirror* devoted three pages plus an editorial to the travails of *Sun* editor David Yelland.**

Boiling with moral indignation at "Wapping's sleaze merchants", the paper noted that the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) had condemned the *Sun*'s "reprehensible" invasion of Sophie Rhys-Jones's privacy.

"In a further humiliation David Yelland was ordered to make a SECOND grovelling apology to Sophie, because his first was deemed too insincere". According to the *Mirror*, no editor should be allowed to survive such a debacle: "When Mr Yelland says it's time to move on, we agree. He should move on – and resign."

There is, however, a precedent for editors clinging to their jobs in these circumstances. On 2 April 1995 the *News of the Screws* printed a long-lens photo of Countess Spencer walking in the grounds of a private clinic, under the headline: "DI'S SISTER-IN-LAW IN BOOZE AND BULIMIA CLINIC... ROYAL EXCLUSIVE." A week later, after angry protests from Earl Spencer and others, the editor published a half-hearted apology: "Careful consideration was given to the publication of that picture for we knew it could be in breach of the Code of Practice. If it caused offence or distress to Lady Spencer, we apologise to her. But one reason we carried it was to prove that our story was true."

The PCC was unimpressed. It ruled that the "apology" was manifestly insincere and inadequate, and that the photograph was a flagrant and thoroughly reprehensible breach of the PCC's privacy code. Even the Dirty Digger publicly rebuked his editor, announcing that "the young man went over the top... I have reminded [him] forcefully of his responsibility". In a further humiliation, the hapless young editor was ordered to make a SECOND grovelling apology to Lady Spencer. But in spite of calls for his sacking, he kept his job. And a few months later, fully rehabilitated, the Wapping sleaze-merchant was poached by the *Daily Mirror*.

Who was the lucky chap? Step forward, *Mirror* editor... Piers Morgan.

*"And you say it suddenly appeared a couple of days ago while you were working in your office at the Sun, Mr Yelland?"*

**ALAS! The divine romance between The Artist Formerly Known as Sinead O'Connor and *Mirror* hack Neil Michael – whose intimate access gave him scoops galore about her "ordination" – has ended in tears.**

As we revealed in *Eye* 976, Piers Morgan and his Irish editor Craig "Bouncing Bog Brush" Mackenzie initially disapproved of Michael conducting his secret affair in company time. But as phone calls from rival media outlets arrived, the *Mirror*'s syndication unit realised there was money to be made.

Pictures of TAFKASOC dressed in her dog-collar were supplied to newspapers and magazines worldwide, earning the *Mirror* a substantial five-figure sum. In a rare bout of commonsense – possibly the result of divine intervention – TAFKASOC decided she was being exploited. She has now ditched the hapless *Mirror*man.

*"I missed"*

**TIMES hackette Eve-Ann Prentice was the heroine of Wapping last week after filing dramatic reports from inside Kosovo of how she had been lucky to escape with her life when a Nato attack killed her interpreter and wounded several journalists, including herself.**

The *Times* carried long first-person accounts – "The bomb hit. I thought we were dead" – and large pictures of its intrepid reporter. Sister Murdoch paper the *Sun* went even further, with a spread on "the Iron Lady of Kosovo". Don't send in Nato, it joked, send in "Our Eve-Ann".

Prentice's sudden status as the new Martha Gellhorn is somewhat embarrassing for *Times* editor Peter Stothard and his "executive foreign editor" Graham Paterson. For it was the piggish Paterson who a couple of years back demoted Prentice from her position as *Times* diplomatic correspondent, telling her she had "no sense of history".

The idea, presumably, was that Prentice would resign; but she hung on to her non-job, writing makeweight features about motoring and office life. On 24 March, for instance, the day the air strikes began, Prentice was "in a war of words with a speech recognition program that won't understand". Other recent assignments had included "Bird's-eye view of motor misery" and "Do copiers make us ill?"

But after the war started Prentice badgered foreign editor Bronwen Maddox to let her go to Yugoslavia – she had excellent contacts there and would be allowed in, unlike other *Times* hacks. So she went, and successfully reported the conflict from behind Serb lines until she found herself at the wrong end of a Nato bomb near Prizren.

After the welcome home party, will Stothard send his war heroine back to reporting traffic jams and errant photocopiers?

**WHAT is the truth behind the spiking of Leo Abse's psychoanalysis of Tony Blair, which was suddenly dropped from the *New Statesman*?**

When Abse delivered his copy *Staggers* editor Peter Wilby described it as "wonderful", while political editor Steve Richards held it to be "excellent stuff". But a day later Abse was told that since Blair's father – also called Leo – was seriously ill, it would be in bad taste to refer to him "wandering from one rented accommodation to another, dragging his young family with him", and depriving the infant Tone of the "authentic identity" which still eludes him.

Happily, however, Blair Snr is in rude health, and it emerged that reports of his imminent demise had been greatly exaggerated by Number Ten in an effort to stop the piece from running. "We have been misled disgracefully by Downing Street", muttered a disgruntled executive from the *Staggers* to the *Daily Mail*. Which seems an odd reaction, given that the situation only arose because Wilby and Richards insisted on getting Downing Street to clear the piece before they dared to run it.

**THE immensely grand Max "Hitler" Hastings, editor of the London *Evening Standard*, certainly knows how to keep the boss class in its place.**

Two weeks ago he held a lunch to introduce the new Lord Rothermere, his proprietor, to selected *Standard* hacks. Hitler dominated the proceedings throughout, helping himself to gratis cigars without offering them round and then scoffing an entire plateful of cheese before anyone else could have it.

Eventually, however, young Rothermere plucked up the courage to speak, and began telling a long anecedote. "Right, that's enough of that," Max cried, rising to his feet before the mild-mannered proprietor could reach his punchline. "There's work to be done."

**THE Clouseau-style sleuths of the *Sunday Times* Insight team are tremendously excited by their discovery that companies such as Ford and Rover operate a "VIP scheme" under which several MPs have received new cars at "discounts of up to 15 per cent".**

They have even managed to identify the "key figure in the affair" – Ian Button, a motor-trade manager from Milton Keynes who has a Commons pass in his capacity as occasional researcher for Ken Purchase MP, Robin Cook's PPS.

Is this clear evidence of "new" Labour sleaze, as the *Sunday Times* seems to think? Er, not quite. For decades the big car companies have offered discounts to anyone in the public eye – including *Sunday Times* hacks. Oh, and Ian Button was originally given a House of Commons pass by the exceedingly right-wing Tory MP John Carlisle.

"It's nothing new," Carlisle told the *Eye* last week. He should know: when not pontificating in parliament about the wonders of apartheid, Carlisle was a part-time director of the Bletchley Motor Group, Button's employer. "When I came into the House in 1979 Vauxhall, Rover and Ford already operated a VIP scheme. It wasn't just available to MPs: I know the royal family used to be on the list." The only difference, according to Carlisle, is that in those days the discounts were as high as 25 percent, but since then "the VIP rate has dropped dramatically".

Button agrees. In fact he claims that the discounts now given to MPs are no better than those which many car-dealers offer the public: "Managers are offering stonking deals for the man in the street as well as for VIPs."

It was only after Carlisle lost his seat in 1997 that Button transferred his services to Labour's Ken Purchase. And what is the nature of his "research" work? Button explained to the *Eye* that Purchase, like Carlisle, represented a constituency with a big car-factory, and therefore needed "unbiased background information" on the motor-trade. He flatly denied the *Sunday Times*'s suggestion that he was some sort of secret wheeler-dealer. "I'm afraid I'm a very boring grey-suited person."

**SIMON HURSTHOUSE, chief sub-editor on IPC's *Cycling Weekly*, is clearly a man to watch.**

He recently entered a charity fun-run, organised by the Immune Development Trust, to raise money for people with MS, cancer, lupus and HIV/AIDS. This took the form of a "vertical marathon" up the stairs of IPC's tower-block at Blackfriars, and 75 runners competed.

Hursthouse put in the fastest time. But when he collected the £500 first prize – dinner for two and an overnight stay at the Vineyard Hotel and restaurant at Stockcross, Berkshire – he confessed to the organisers that he had raised just £2 in sponsorship. He then asked if he could have his £25 entry fee refunded. "I did get the impression from them that they were a bit annoyed," Hursthouse admitted last week.

They were even more incredulous when Hursthouse's colleague Gordon Knight, who put in the second fastest time and collected an aromatherapy treatment as his prize, revealed that he had raised a grand total of zero pounds in sponsorship.

"We feel very cheated by them," Lev Pedro, the director of IDT, told the *Eye*. "We put up the fund-raising event in good faith. We didn't ever think that people would behave in that way."

People probably don't; but hacks, as any fule kno, are a different species.

# HICKWATCH

## Not To Mention Hollioake, Flintoff And Co

**JUST as the first snowfall of winter always catches rail companies unawares, so sports hacks are continually shocked and amazed by another regular seasonal occurrence: England losing at cricket.**

More than a century ago, the *Sporting Times* published an epitaph "in affectionate remembrance of English cricket, which died at the Oval on 29 August 1882, deeply lamented by a large circle of sorrowing friends and acquaintances, RIP". Yet Fleet Street's finest still treat a single England victory over second-rate opposition as proof that resurrection is imminent – and are then obliged to write the obituary all over again when England go crashing to defeat. Here's a small part of the never-ending cycle:

**January 1997:** Zimbabwe beats England by 131 runs in a one-day international, winning the series 3-0. Derek Pringle's report in the *Independent* is headlined: "Just When We Thought England Couldn't Do Any Worse..."

**June 1997:** "How England Thumped 'Em!" crows the *Sun*, celebrating Australia's dismissal for 118 on the first day of the first Test. The *Express* reports that "England's vibrant and successful cricket this summer has got schoolchildren talking about Croft rather than Cantona, Hussain rather than Hoddle... The excitement being generated by Mike Atherton's team has not been felt since the heyday of Ian Botham at his swashbuckling best..." England duly goes on to lose the series, and Australia retains the Ashes for the fifth time in succession.

**August 1998:** England wins its first Test series for 12 years by beating South Africa 2-1 – though even English observers admit that this owes more to luck and bad umpiring than skill. "In a just world, this would have been a drawn series," Christopher Martin-Jenkins writes in the *Daily Telegraph*. "But winning can become a habit because of the confidence and team spirit which a success like this engenders... The corner may finally have been turned." Right-wing pundit Leo McKinstry goes into ecstasies all over the *Daily Mail*'s leader page: "It is to the timeless virtues of the English character, embodied in the best features of cricket, that we must attribute this summer's triumphs." Does this mean that any future defeats should be blamed on defects in the national character? Luckily the question doesn't arise: "The series win is not a flash in the pan but the start of a great revival, continuing with the return of the Ashes this winter."

**December 1998:** And so to Australia. When England actually wins the Fourth Test (by the huge margin of 12 runs), joy is unconfined. "England have at last done the decent thing," reports Derek Pringle in the *Indie*. "The victory will have done wonders for England's flagging morale." Or not, as the case may be: England loses the final Test, and Australia retains the Ashes by 3-1. Even so, Alan Lee of *The Times* argues that England will be "emboldened by defeat".

**January 1999:** The English team stays Down Under for a triangular one-day competition. "It is beginning to look seriously as if England are on a roll," Stephen Brenkley reports in the *Indie* after Alec Stewart's boys beat the Sri Lankans. According to Jim Holden of the *Express*, England is "suddenly looking like a team who know how to win". The *Sun*'s John Etheridge reckons that England's players are now "early favourites" to win the tournament. Needless to say, we are duly slaughtered by Australia in the final. The margin of defeat – 162 runs – is England's second-worst in nearly 30 years of one-day internationals. "England need not despair," Michael Henderson argues in *The Times*. "Few teams win one-day tournaments in other countries..." It'll all be quite different back in Blighty, where the world cup is taking place this summer.

**5 April 1999:** "Signs appear promising all round for England," a *Daily Telegraph* headline announces, reporting that our national team managed to beat the Pakistani second eleven in a practice match at Lahore.

**8 April 1999:** "Stew's World In Tatters," a *Sun* headline announces, reporting England's rout at the hands of the Pakistani first eleven. "In three decades of one-day internationals, England have never before conceded as many as 323 runs," John Etheridge notes. He daringly suggests that "some improvement is needed" before the world cup.

**10 April:** "Alec Stewart can forget all about bonuses for winning the World Cup, which starts in a little over a month," Chris Lander reports in the *Mirror*. "After last night's pathetic 20-run defeat by India in the Coca-Cola Cup, you would not back them to beat a county side."

**10 May:** Lander is proved wrong: England win a warm-up game against Essex – by, er, one run.

**15 May:** The world cup begins with England beating an out-of-form Sri Lanka. "Chocks away, England's World Cup campaign is speeding down the runway," John Etheridge gushes in the *Sun*. Etheridge claims, wrongly, that England now needs only to beat Zimbabwe and Kenya to qualify for the next stage, the Super Six. "But, of course, their ambitions are higher than that." A day later, Simon Wilde of the *Sunday Times* is still rejoicing: "With every passing hour, Alec Stewart's return to form, and the grimly efficient England team performance that surrounded it, take on ever grander proportions..." Stephen Brenkley in the *Sindie* thinks this game "may become memorable as the moment Alec Stewart and his team rediscovered their sense of purpose".

**23 May:** Whoops! England is dismissed for 103, losing to South Africa by 122 runs. Alec Stewart is out first ball. Ted Corbett of the *Sunday People* loyally blames it all on the umpire who adjudged him LBW: "If that was out I am a banana!" But in the next day's *Sun*, John Etheridge is still looking on the bright side: "Call it optimism, call it madness. At least a positive feeling still exists in the England camp."

**26 May:** Victory over Zimbabwe. "Barring floods, plague and pestilence, England will qualify for the second stage of the World Cup," Michael Henderson declares in the *Telegraph*.

**30 May:** Call it optimism, call it madness: the *Observer* announces a special prize-draw. "It's unclear who England will be playing in the next stage. However, we know they have qualified and... you can be there at all England's three crucial Super Six games by simply ringing the number below." Co-sponsoring the prize with the *Observer* is Scrumpy Jack, the England team's official cider: "Like the game it supports, Scrumpy Jack is quintessentially English..." And no bloody good, presumably.

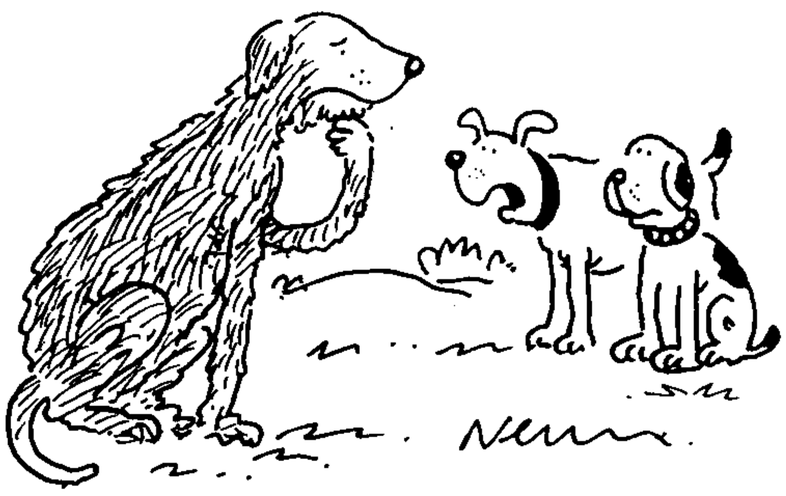
**31 May:** England is out of the cup following a 63-run defeat by India. The back page of the *Sun* has a photo of Alec Stewart under the huge headline "GUILTY – OF WRECKING ENGLISH CRICKET". Can this by any chance be the same newspaper which on 15 May carried the equally huge headline "STEW DID US PROUD!"? Inside, John Etheridge unwittingly echoes the *Sporting Times* of 1882: "Let's get things fully in proportion – this was only the most catastrophic day in English cricket." Well, at least until the next one...

## Number crunchings

# Number 1,500

■ Number of Yugoslavian soldiers Serbia admit have been killed in Nato bombing campaign

■ Number of Yugoslavian civilians Nato admit have been killed in Nato bombing campaign



*"He's a Northern Irish Wolfhound — he can't remember where he's buried his bones"*

**AMID much yawning and general buttock scratching, Britain goes to the Euro polls this Thursday – or rather, most of it won't bother.**

Should the seething masses who will not vote in the elections to the European parliament be blamed for their general apathy? Or do perhaps the main parties secretly hope that the poll will be a less than huge endorsement for a Europe mired in sleaze, whose commissioners were all recently forced to resign; for the fast-sinking euro; and for the new PR system for electing MEPs to Strasbourg which no one understands?

Sadly the latter reason is the most persuasive, for all three main parties have different reasons for wanting this election forgotten as soon as possible.

Although some Tories do entertain hopes of making gains from a pisspoor turn-out on the strength of their opposition to the euro, the only fly in the ointment is that the handful of sitting Tory MEPs are, in the main, Europhile and hence friends of the single currency. These MEPs have been minded to keep very quiet indeed and William Hague dares not go the extra mile to hoover up Eurosceptic votes by bollocking them lest he frighten old war horses such as Ken Clarke and Michael Heseltine.

As for Captain Pantsdown, these elections should provide a final rousing curtain call for the old trooper, except for the fact that the Liberal Democrats find themselves the most pro-European party, while a majority of Lib Dem voters tell pollsters they don't want EMU. Pantsdown has therefore settled for the expedient of not reminding voters of his party's undying love for EMU, preferring not to mention it at all in campaign literature.

"New" Labour is caught in a similar vice. Not only do its core voters demonstrate an unbridled xenophobia about all things European – and these are the voters the party is hoping to coax out to vote – but the Blairites had until now rather hoped that this sort of Labour voter had gone to a rest home. Meanwhile darker schemers at the party's Millbank HQ secretly hope that a feeble result for Labour at the Euro polls will finally kill off any idea of PR for the House of Commons and any prospect of more Blairite deals with Pantsdown's increasingly mutinous crew.

*'Cassius'*

**BUMPTIOUS Blair "Babes" in the parliamentary Labour party are increasingly annoying their peers and vengeance may not be delayed much longer.**

When, some weeks ago, veteran Labour MP Tam Dalyell used the weekly PLP meeting to ask Tony Blair if the bombing of Iraq had ever been discussed by the European parliament or the European Labour party, he was booed by a handful of whey-faced Blair babes whom few recognised. Now older lags have decided to keep a watching brief on the impressionable youngsters and have decided to "out" any future miscreants.

Such kid glove treatment does not extend to Enfield Southgate MP Stephen Twigg, however, "new" Labour's answer to Dale Winton. Older and more experienced backbenchers are hopping mad that the young whipper snapper heckled old Labour leftie Audrey Wise during a recent debate on incapacity benefit. For when Audrey told frontbenchers intent on cutting the benefit that "at least in the 1979 election Labour candidates could tell the electorate that their government had introduced incapacity benefit", Dale thoughtfully quipped "and they [the candidates] could go and lose."

Dale followed his rapier-like aside with a bout of extended smirking and sniggering with fellow new boy David Borrow MP. Old Labour MPs can contain their anger for not much longer.

**LABOUR's commitment to inclusive, open government in the new Welsh assembly is a sham, the *Eye* can reveal. Behind the backs of the Plaid Cymru opposition, the party is already playing politics with the lives of Kosovo refugees for whom there will now be no welcome in the valleys.**

Circulating in the Welsh office is a confidential memo to the Kosovo refugee steering group, dealing with changes in the plans for housing the refugees in Wales.

Originally they were to settle in 10 council areas across South Wales. But not now that the nationalists of Plaid Cymru have taken control of Rhondda Cynon Taff and Caerphilly county borough councils. As the memo suggests, somewhat outrageously: "The new political control of valleys councils could echo that which the refugees are fleeing from."

Thus the refugees will be housed only in the main cities of Cardiff, Newport and Swansea, which are still run by nice "new" Labour. But not that nice. The human flotsam will be stay in hostels and "will not be encouraged to interact with the wider community".

The only visits they can expect will be from social workers... and Labour politicians on photo opportunities. As the memo adds sickeningly: "Government ministers will avail themselves of the publicity opportunities to underscore their commitment to the effort in Kosovo."

## Number crunching

# 34%

of people intend to vote in this week's Euro-elections

of people didn't know there were Euro-elections this week

**BOTH Lord "Boy David" Steel and the increasingly risible leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats, Jim Wallace, promised that in the event of a Lib Dem victory in the Scottish parliament elections "tuition fees would be abolished the following day".**

In the event the Lib Dems came a miserable fourth in the elections; yet despite a pisspoor showing they entered into a shabby deal with "new" Labour and joined the administration. Wallace secured a place for himself in the new cabinet and immediately ratted on his promise by abandoning his opposition to tuition fees for a flatulent "new" Labour promise of a commission of inquiry.

The likely outcome is that the commission will "painstakingly explore all of the options and as a result of widespread consultation [between Donald Dewar and a handful of civil servants] reluctantly recommend that tution fees be retained". Fortunately for Wallace, he has a defender in the shape of the wondrous Captain Pantsdown, who explained the tuition fees volte face to a BBC radio 4 audience. "This," said the eternally pompous Pantsdown, was emblematic of the "maturity of the new politics". The usually respectful audience could not contain themselves. Almost as one they split their sides with mirth at Pantsdown's unwitting cynicism.

**NICE to know that education secretary David Blunkett's department has got its sums right.**

The latest guidelines on teaching maths are guaranteed to provide jobs – though perhaps not in Britain. In order "to keep costs down", attractive ring-binders containing details of the National Numeracy Strategy for primary school teachers have been printed in... Italy.

**HOME secretary Jack Straw took to heart the old adage that politics is show business for ugly people at a Dr Barnardo's conference at the British Medical Association (BMA) last week.**

BMA managers, who are well used to visits from royalty and celebrities, including the late Princess Diana, were surprised when Straw's PA requested that no one ask for his autograph.

Unfazed at the prospect of meeting His Highness the Home Secretary, one member of staff retorted: "I think we'll be able to refrain [sic] ourselves."

**HAVE Tories in Thanet South selected the right prospective parliamentary candidate (PPC) to restore the good name of Jonathan Aitken's former constituency?**

Incoming PPC Mark McGregor, who failed to win the seat of West Ham in 1997, chaired the controversial Federation of Conservative Students (FCS) in the mid-80s. At the time, the highly authoritative *New Musical Express* described the FCS as "Thatcherite devilspawn" – which wasn't an unfitting epithet for a group who used to turn up at NUS conferences wearing "Hang Nelson Mandela" badges.

McGregor knows all about cleaning up shit. He was elected chair of the FCS in the aftermath of the 1985 conference at Loughborough University where the young Tory Turks left destruction in their wake, and a turd in the shower block, prompting then Tory party chairman John Gummer to cut off their funds.

Gummer threatened to expel the hooligans from the party, but at the 1986 FCS conference McGregor defended their actions. "The named individuals are back here," he crowed. "I believe we have triumphed comrades. We are back and we are back for good."

Will he bring a similar zeal to his new comrades in Thanet?

**THIS year's ballot for Labour's national executive committee (NEC), which closes on Monday 14 June, has been a relatively quiet affair.**

In the absence of unconstitutional telephone campaigning by party controllers (98) or a stage managed face-off between Peter Mandelson and Ken Livingstone (97), 1999's election has passed with little press comment beyond one or two hacks' noting candidate Ruth Turner's track record as founder of the *Big Issue in the North*, the Manchester-based version of the national magazine sold in aid of the homeless.

Ms Turner is being widely touted as a favourite of the party HQ at Millbank – largely by Millbank, as it happens, which is eager to see her take her place beside Michael Cashman, Diana Jeuda and their other Blairite clones.

In an entirely unconnected development, the *Big Issue in the North* has seen some interesting editorial changes over the last couple of months. First political columnist Ian MacWhirter, a man with little good to say about "new" Labour, was quietly dropped. Then several political stories which ran in the other regional versions of the magazine were declined by the Manchester office in favour of fluffy celebrity pieces.

Northern readers have also been denied the chance to take part in the *Big Issue*'s campaign against the voucher system for asylum seekers – it has run in the London, Wales, and South West editions, and even in Scotland, where the system does not apply, but has been conspicuously absent in the edition of which Ruth Turner styles herself "proprietor".

No doubt this is entirely coincidental, and even if Ms Turner is elected, the magazine will continue to be the fiercely anti-establishment voice it was set up to be.

*"Being beaten at school had a terrible effect on me — it's why I gave up teaching"*

# AITKEN The Missing Millions and the Missing Wife

**ON Tuesday lawyers for a noisily tearful arms dealer Jonathan Aitken tried to persuade the Old Bailey that he deserves leniency.**

As well as arranging testimonials from C-list politicians, Old Etonians, spanking journalists like Paul Johnson, and other arms dealers, the former cabinet minister was toying with pleading that a bad case of asthma — suddenly developed — would endanger his life if he is sent to prison (shades of Ernest Saunders, the only man in the world to have developed reversible Alzheimer's disease, which mysteriously got better after he was released from jail).

But there are two issues Aitken's lawyers kept very quiet about at his sentencing hearing. One is his *disappearing millions* and the second is his disappearing wife.

The millionaire ex-minister has welshed on all his debts and has had himself declared bankrupt. The debts include one to *Private Eye*, against whom he started a libel action after a series of exposures by Paul Foot of his arms-dealing and financial shenanigans. He has not pursued it, but has listed the debt — for the *Eye*'s legal costs in defending themselves — in an "individual voluntary arrangement" offer to his creditors last March as "£15,000 potential outstanding costs". He suggested paying them off at 6.5p in the pound, ie an impressive £975. He then changed his mind and in April wrote to lawyers saying he didn't expect to pay the *Eye* anything at all, as it was merely a "contingent claim".

Aitken also owes more than £1.5m to the *Guardian* and Granada's lawyers after the collapse of his libel case. But all his £3m-plus assets have allegedly disappeared. His lawyer, Michael Coleman of Harkavys, says the bankruptcy trustees are "vindictive" in taking away his client's Rolex, presented to him by his former employer, Prince Mohammed of Saudi Arabia, in the absence of any visible cash. But staff at Baker Tilly, the bankruptcy officers, are puzzled by this. For Coleman lists himself as the third largest creditor in the bankruptcy, maintaining Aitken owes him £120,000 in unpaid fees. So Coleman is complaining about an attempt to recover his own debts.

Coleman, a flamboyant figure who commutes from a luxury New York apartment, has previously represented such wide boys as George Walker and such colourful offshore financiers as Edward St George of Grand Bahama. He specialises in setting up discreet trusts in Monaco.

An offshore haven the bankruptcy trustees might well want to probe is in the Channel Isles. A whole group of associates — Aitken's Old Etonian chum, the solicitor Mark Vere Nicholl; the Saudi "fixer" Said Ayas; and the greedy Prince Mohammed himself — all operated (perfectly legal) companies in Guernsey, through which millions have been sluiced. Guernsey allows secret ownership of companies.

Curiously Aitken too ran a share account in Guernsey, through brokers Bachmann and Co, and a Swiss bank account at Credit Suisse. In the past, he has also used his wife's Swiss company, Comesta, as a funnel for commissions.

His Serbian wife Lolicia is the other mystery. She is wanted, in theory, as a fellow conspirator over Aitken's conspiracy to pervert the course of justice, but she rapidly disappeared abroad after the collapse of Aitken's libel trial. While Aitken's assets have vanished, Lolicia's have mysteriously multiplied. She has acquired a fashionable Paris flat at 40 Rue de Bac; equally fashionable Swiss premises outside Lausanne; and a house in Croatia, in Split. She has registered a divorce in Switzerland from Aitken, and, according to Aitken, she and her family have somehow become the true legal owners of his £2m mansion in Lord North St; his mother's £300,000 flat around the corner; his £77,000 plot of land in Australia; all the £500,000 proceeds from the sale of his exclusive country house at Sandwich Bay; the finest pictures and porcelain in his home; and even the black Cherokee Jeep Aitken still drives around in.

So it was little surprise when Aitken admitted to contacts last month that his split with Lolicia had been merely a "lawyers divorce". Aitken-watchers wonder whether there might not be a heartwarming reconciliation this week.

# NOOKS and CORNERS

**WHAT price architecture, especially in Wales? A couple of weeks ago, before they filed into their converted office block which is to be their home until their exciting new masterpiece by My Lord Rogers of Riverside is ready for them even though Cardiff's magnificent City Hall lies empty, the members of the new Welsh assembly began their work with a service in Llandaff Cathedral in the presence of the queen.**

And quite right too: it is one of the great buildings of Wales which has survived several disasters to evolve into a subtle and complex work of art. But now another disaster is threatened.

Llandaff has certainly suffered. After the south-west tower collapsed into the nave during the great storm of 1722, a Georgian box was built within the walls of the medieval building. This indignity was undone in the 1850s when the cathedral was restored by John Pritchard and J.P. Seddon: a new south-west tower and spire was built, the nave reroofed and the interior refurnished. Then much of this remarkably good work was undone in 1941 when a landmine exploded nextdoor. The battered cathedral was then cleverly restored and enlarged by George Pace, who was surely one of the best and most interesting church architects in Britain of his time, even if somewhat too prolific.

Today Llandaff is a medieval building with modern additions, enhanced by pre-Raphaelite furnishings of the 1850s and work by artists like John Piper and Jacob Epstein of a century later. And it is good: a memorable, special place on the fringe of Cardiff.

Now, the successor to John Pritchard and George Pace is Clews Architects Limited of Banbury. Who they? Well, to quote the *RIBA Directory of Practices*, "the main thrusts of the work of the Practice teams are new buildings which require the 'bespoke' approach, design for buildings that are in a sensitive setting and work on historic buildings. We will continue to bring a dynamic view, combining test ideas and proven methods with flair and persistence, to achieve excellence."

So there. Last year, in furtherance of Dean John Rogers' vision to make Llandaff Cathedral more "relevant" to South Wales (despite having managed to stand in South Wales for more than a millennium), Messrs Clews proposed to place a sort of glass-roofed steel shed in front of the west end, connected with the Prebendal House to the north-west by a glazed corridor. This was scotched, as it were, by local horror and opposition.

But the prelates of Wales, no less than those of the Church of England, dislike being thwarted, so the dynamic dean now is pushing forward with a new scheme for the west end — this time in secret. And it is buttressed by political correctness, for what is proposed is apparently all for the benefit of the disabled, whom no man dareth gainsay, as well as being connected with his dream of erecting a Miners' Memorial.

Eager to do the bidding of their employers, the wretched Messrs Clews now propose to spoil the west end with a dynamic view of altered levels, ramps and new paths, which involves moving the chest tombs and headstones which have been there for centuries and recorded in watercolours by Turner, Sandby and other artists.

Perhaps it needs to be pointed out to the dean that the west end is the glory of Llandaff Cathedral. With its Norman entrance arch, Early English lancet windows, late medieval north-west tower balanced by Pritchard's southern one, it is a magnificent composition picturesquely sheltered by rising ground to the west and south. This is a place and a setting which ought to be sacrosanct. But no: a red sandstone cobbled path — difficult for the disabled? — is to go, even though it is duplicated by an existing asphalted road.

And what are the disabled to do once they get inside? For another glory of Llandaff is the flight of steps down from the west door to the floor of the nave. It is from this elevated door that the visitor first enjoys a dramatic elevated view of the extraordinary arch which Pace flung across the interior, carrying an organ and Epstein's figure of Christ in Majesty. So what will happen to these dangerous steps? More ramps, I suppose: another "test idea".

Of course there should be access for the disabled, but without mutilating something very special. And, as it happens, there is already an entrance for the disabled at the east end of the south aisle. This is right next to a car park where everything is all on the level. But that is not the point, of course. Dean Rogers will leave his mark for posterity, and if he cannot emulate his predecessors by employing great artists, Messrs Clews Ltd, of Banbury, will just have to do.

In an earlier incarnation the good dean spoiled Ebbw Vale Church so, as Llandaff has remained untouched since the 1960s, it is obviously fair game for being made more relevant. But he retires later this year, so would it not be more courteous to leave decisions about spoiling Llandaff Cathedral to his successor?

*'Piloti'*

## O·B·N·K

I sat next to Cherie and opposite Tone.
They are, quite simply, as Americans mumble,
"Wonderful people".

**MICHAEL WINNER**
**Sunday Times**

***£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.***

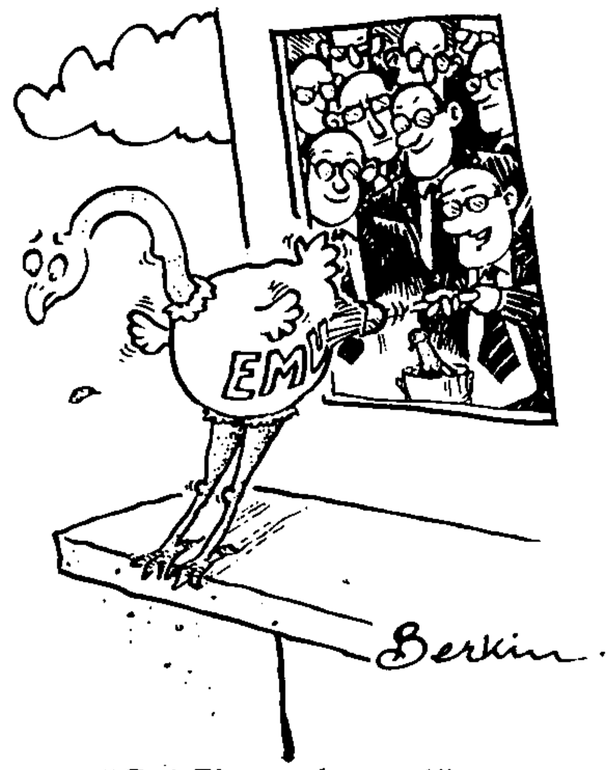
Sure enough, a large box arrived a few hours later. Inside were a few of his lordship's old socks and shirts – and 50 copies of Jeffrey Archer novels!

*'Backbiter'*

## JUST FANCY THAT!

**IS there no limit to the generosity of Lord Archer?**

As part of his quixotic campaign to become mayor of London, Archer recently visited a day-centre for the homeless near Victoria Station – the selfsame terminus where Monica Coughlan once received a thick envelope of dosh from the charitable millionaire. As he was leaving, Jeffrey promised the staff that he would donate a box of "goodies" which could be distributed to homeless people at the local night-shelter.




*"Go! Fly, my beauty!"*

# EYE TV

## Bad Girls (ITV)

**AS a nation sleeps, the race for the director-generalship of the BBC hots up. Of all the currently favoured candidates (Greg Dyke, Alan Botney, Flat Eric, TV's Charles Moore) possibly the least charismatic is the current overlord of ITV network centre, who like most people in the media is called Richard Eyre.**

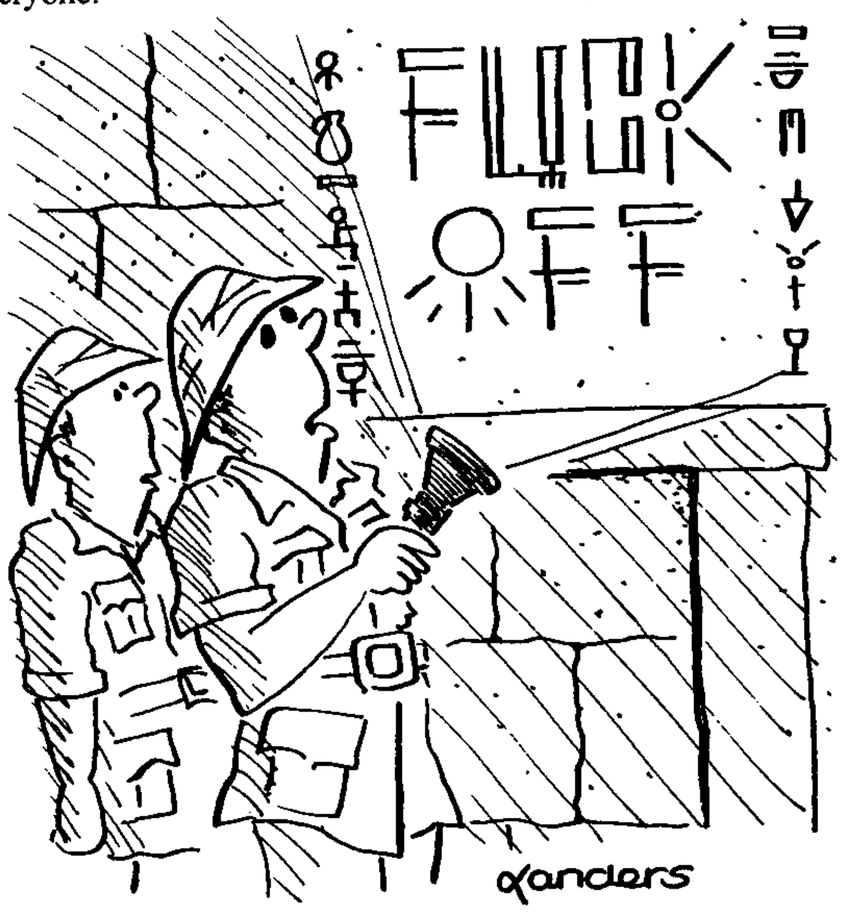
Done a good job, says everyone. Turned the station round, echoes everyone else. Needless to say, neither everyone nor everyone else has actually watched ITV lately, especially now that News At Ten has gone. But never mind, because in a fractious commercial environment, where fear of failure is endemic, Eyre has become known as "a safe pair of hands". Commercially astute and untainted by any accusations of creativity, he has emerged as the very model of the modern director-general.

So let's hope the BBC governors had time to catch Bad Girls last Tuesday, or at least asked a friend to tape it for them. If any new show can typify the cynicism, moral bankruptcy and simple third-rate complacency of Eyre's ITV — and let's face it, most of them do — Bad Girls would probably top them all.

It's a glossy, skilfully constructed piece of late 1990s pap, a women's prison drama effortlessly modelled on thousands of previous women's prison dramas. The acting's not bad; the script has a few meaty lines; technically you can't fault a moment of it. But it's also one of the most soulless series yet seen on a channel that will never take a risk when it can play safe, and seems increasingly to regard its audience with contempt. "It's only telly," say TV professionals when they know they are making something crap. Bad Girls is barely even that.

Episode one started with the rehearsal for a fashion show (girls in skimpy dresses) and ended with the fashion show itself (girls in even skimpier dresses). Clothing material is at a premium in HM Prison Muffdiver, especially for the more beautiful inmates, although everyone is well supplied with make-up. But as the girls swish around to disco music, one of their number is alone in her cell having a miscarriage.

"Hooray!" shouts the producer, who is none other than Mad Brian Park, looter of Coronation Street and mass-murderer on C5's Family Affairs. "Call for the ketchup!"




*"So much for the Mummy's curse"*

Until a few years ago miscarriages were barely even mentioned on British TV, let alone shown in visceral detail. But on Richard Eyre's brave new ITV they're an excuse for a bloodfest choreographed by Hannibal Lecter. As Carol screams in agony, Villainous Warder Number One refuses to summon help and slams the speaking hatch shut. Thus are the soap-like rhythms of the piece established. Brutally short scenes, cardboard characters, black and white moral issues people you can loathe before the first commercial break — and, of course, loads of girls to look at, all of them white, most of them gorgeous, a few of them palpably middle class with unconvincing Estuary English accents. Next to this, Prisoner Cell Block H qualifies as gritty realism.

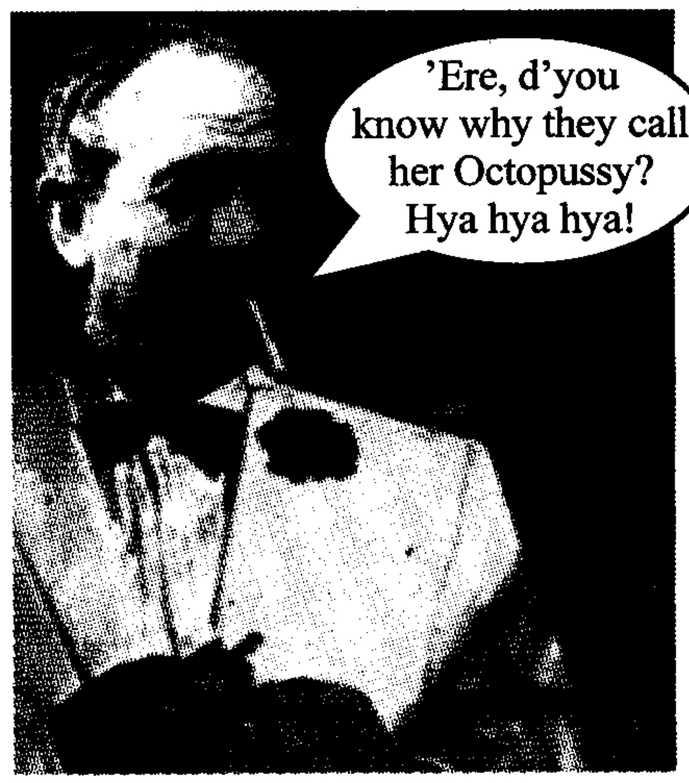
Real women's prisons are full of ethnic minorities, the mentally ill, the disadvantaged and the dispossessed. Bad Girls doesn't want to know about any of that. But it does have an unfeasibly glam female governor with a hunky boyfriend. It has a randy warder who boffs all the more vulnerable young lovelies. It has an upper-class shoplifter called Smelly Nelly, who seems worryingly designed to provide light relief. And, as all the trailers showed, it has lesbians. Loads and loads of lesbians, snogging each other, fondling each other and generally inviting sad male viewers to tune in in their millions. None of these lesbians actually appeared in episode one, but it's important to keep the sad men watching every week and taping the show just in case. In ITV network centre they call this "building an audience".

Most male TV critics, so far, have been kind, although when you have to watch as many docusoaps as they now have to, the promise of random lesbianism may be more than they can resist. But the sheer mediocrity of Bad Girls is ultimately dispiriting — as is the idea that the man ultimately responsible for it should even be considered for the top job at the BBC. No doubt he does have a safe pair of hands, but isn't it more important to know where they've been?

*'Couch Potato'*

## SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore




**Sid James Bond**

## MEDIA NEWS

**THE BBC had a good war in the Balkans: its licence fee-funded correspondents were heavily in demand by cash-strapped commercial rivals.**

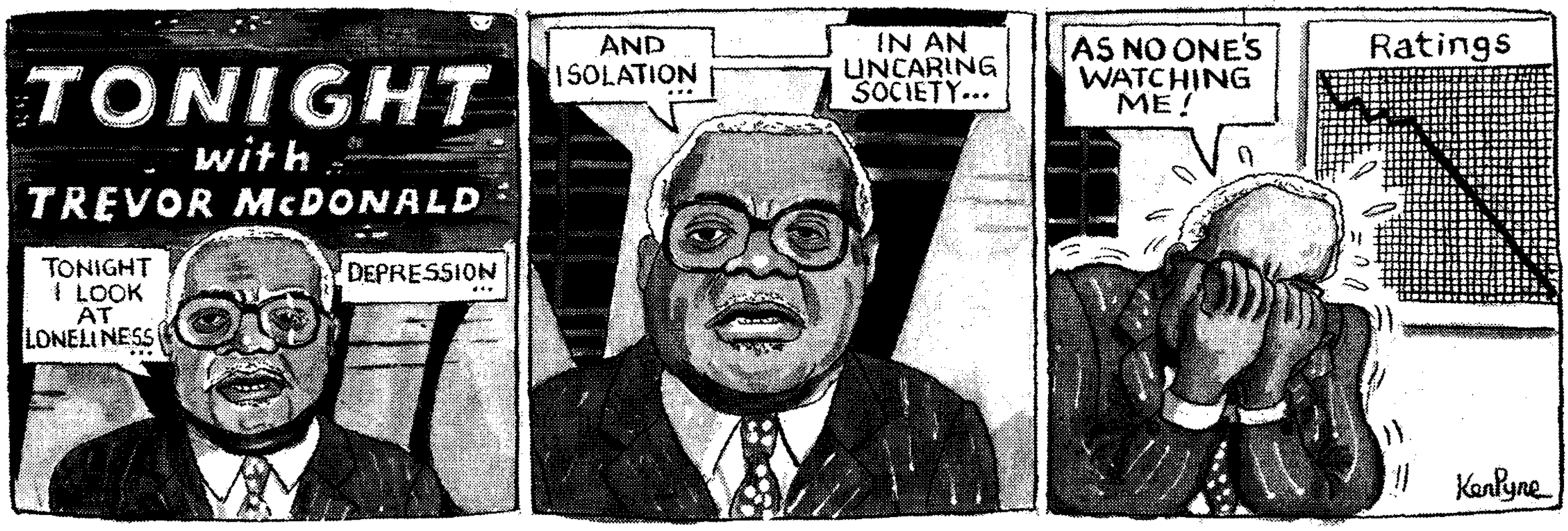
Newspaper budgets may have been slashed but the BBC can still just about afford to send the likes of John Simpson abroad, thus enabling the *Sunday Telegraph* to fill a weekly slot on its foreign pages (even if Simpson insists that he covers "world affairs").

His colleagues Ben Brown, special correspondent for the *Nine O'clock News*, and Jacky Rowland, general BBC hackette, also helped plug the gaps in Conrad Black's newsgathering effort, writing from Albania and Belgrade respectively (having been flown out at BBC expense).

At the even poorer Express group *Newsnight*'s Mark Urban established himself as the resident military analyst, although the arrival of the BBC's arts correspondent Rosie Millard on the features pages, reviewing *Notting Hill* and interviewing Chris Smith, shows that BBC staffers have a use beyond hard news.

Some may feel this deployment of BBC staff is a little odd. After all, not so long ago the BBC used to publish a weekly magazine featuring its correspondents' reports. Alas, instead of getting the glossy relaunch enjoyed by other BBC publications such as *Radio Times* and *Top of the Pops*, the *Listener* was axed by the Birtist number-crunchers on the grounds that there was no demand for its content!

Now, instead of selling BBC hacks' words to the public itself, the corporation has ended up subsidising its commercial rivals with no gain for licence fee payers. More proof that management consultancy works. Or doesn't.



**WHEN BBC television lost the right to broadcast home Test matches to Channel 4, staff on Radio 4's *Test Match Special* enjoyed the *Schadenfreude* and allowed themselves a patronising shake of the head over the telly lot's carelessness.**

Alas a similar thunderbolt was heading for *TMS*.

The news that Kelvin MacKenzie's Talk Radio had snapped up the rights to England's winter tour of South Africa left producer Peter Baxter and his nubile assistant Shulpa Patel feeling numb.

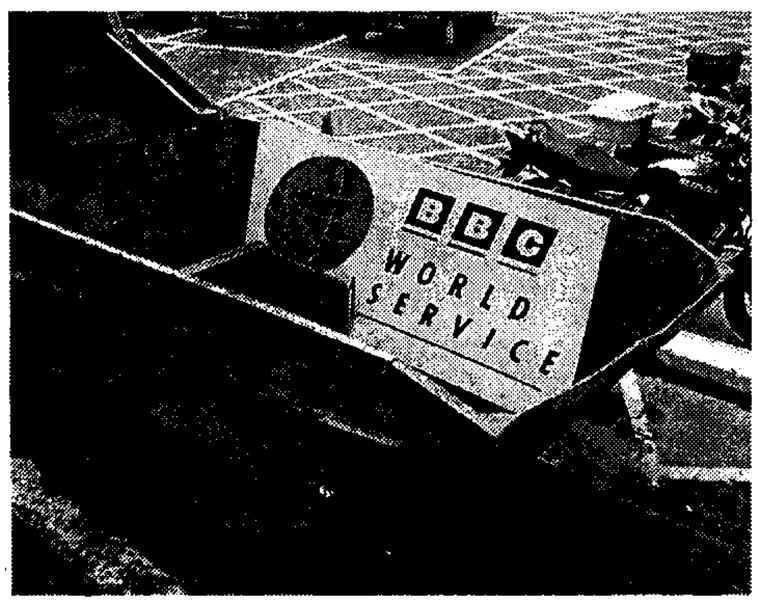
As luck would have it, Ali Bacher, the supremo of South African cricket who sold next winter's broadcasting rights to Talk Radio without even bothering to talk to the BBC, wandered into the *TMS* box when it rained during a warm-up game at Canterbury. Being a good sport, he agreed to be interviewed by Baxter, who had been reduced to chuntering about ducks on the outfield. Baxter gently chided Bacher for not playing fair and pleaded on air for rights to the world cup in 2003. Bacher smiled benevolently – and left.

*Baxter* also has a fight on his hands to preserve one of his great successes – Aggers. Jonathan Agnew, former England and Leicestershire trundler turned BBC cricket correspondent, is the housewife's choice on *TMS*. But the telly keeps borrowing him, much to Baxter's chagrin, leaving other commentators to cover when Aggers should be at the mike. Nightmares involving Aggers, Sky TV and large chequebooks do little to help Baxter sleep at night.

**SOPHIE Rhys-Jones' humiliation is complete. Not only has she become a page three girl for the *Sun*, but she has earned the pity of the unlovely Christine Hamilton, wife of disgraced Neil.**

La Hamilton told friends at George Gardiner's recent book launch that she felt a kinship with the cruelly treated Sophie, for she too had found herself plastered all over the *Sun*.

Christine's hot spread did not feature sexual harassment by a top DJ, but a prolonged bout of tonsil-hockey with a spotty youth during a drunken party at Oxford university last month. She sobbed of her betrayal: "It wasn't so bad for me, because it wasn't a friend. But I was still very upset by it." So upset that she staged the snog again for Channel 4's *Big Breakfast* the next morning – for the usual appearance fee, of course.




**A sign of the times — as seen recently in the BBC's Bush House car park.**

## JILLBALLS

"Diana was our rose… but Jill was our sunflower." — *Interviewee, Channel 4 News.*

## LUVVIES

"Acting is like cliff diving. You are trying to make a beautiful, gracious dive. But you have to hit that swell, or you smash your head and you die. I've been lucky. I feel like I've hit my head on the bottom, but I haven't suffered any mortal injuries."

**MATTHEW MODINE**
**Observer**

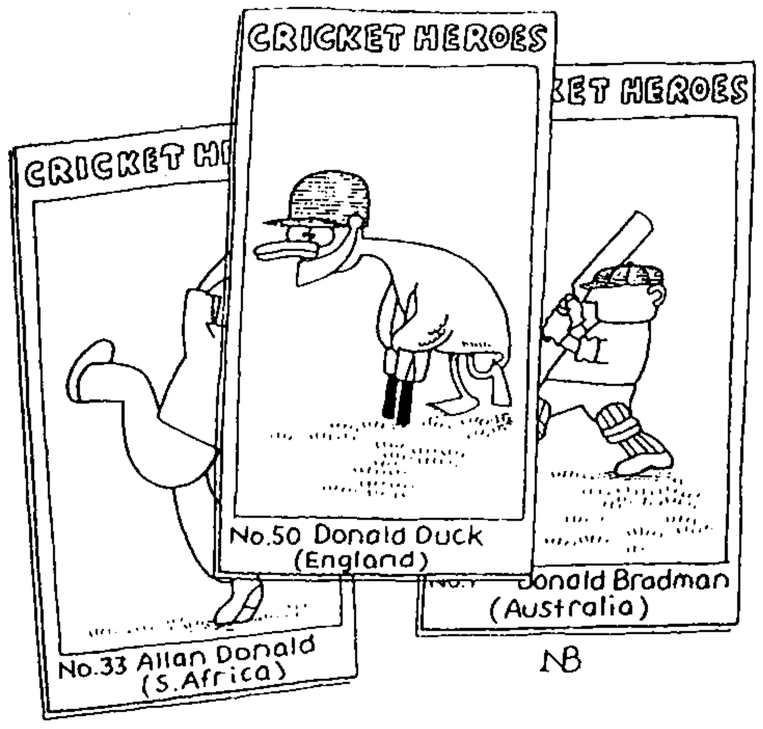
*An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.*

## WORLD OF CRICKET

**THE premature departure of England from the cricket world cup has left the English Cricket Board (ECB) in a deep hole. Billed as the "carnival", *the* event to switch youngsters on to the summer game, it has failed miserably.**

But the ECB is less worried about schoolboys than money. The tournament will make some profit because of the sale of TV rights. But corporate sponsors, meant to be the other big money-spinners, were thin on the ground. Only four (instead of the hoped for eight) could be found to put up £2m each. That left ticket sales and corporate hospitality to make up the shortfall.

An internal ECB document analyses how the board has messed up. The ECB wanted to use this




opportunity to take cricket "to the people", so it insisted on staging big matches on piddling little grounds. It might have worked in 1983, the last time England staged the event, but the world cup has grown since then and no one was prepared for the size of the beast. The internal document points out that the ECB failed to realise that this is a multicultural land and that people travel. So, India v. South Africa among the deck chairs at Hove (max. capacity 4,500) was a nice idea but an absurd reality. Once Sussex members and travelling Indians and South Africans had snapped up tickets, the ordinary Sussex schoolboy had no chance of getting in the ground.

Pakistan is unhappy – to put it mildly – at having had to play two of its big matches at Bristol and Derby. Captain Wasim Akram has demanded that future world cups should all be staged on the sub-continent, where they have big grounds and the crowds to fill them. Ali Bacher, spearheading plans for the 2003 world cup in South Africa, implied that not enough thought had gone into arranging the event. And Indian commentator Harsha Bogle wondered how teams such as India, used to performing before 90,000 in Calcutta, were supposed to find any atmosphere in front of 5,000 on a cold day in Leicester.

The ECB internal paper suggests it could have done itself a favour by staging warm-up matches at bigger county grounds and leaving the real matches to the Test grounds. Tickets averaging £18 at county grounds could have been sold for around £32 at Test grounds. Add on the increased seating capacity (825,000 instead of 300,000 for the group matches) and knock-on marketing opportunities and this would have given the ECB an extra £8m plus.

Lost revenue is one thing, but existing world cup profits are under increasing pressure. Controlling a crowd at a relatively efficient Test ground is nigh on impossible, but at county grounds the old steward and his dog have no chance. Crowd invasions have led to demands from players and umpires for increased security and this has eaten into profits. Merchandise sales are also depressed. No one wants an England replica kit and sales of the England world cup song are non-existent.

County cricket will end up bearing the losses incurred by the ECB's inept handling of a global gold mine. Having promised the counties 15 percent of its anticipated profit of £14m (the International Cricket Council gets the first £17m), the ECB is now talking about reducing this to 5 percent of an actual profit of only £8m at best.

Apart from security firms and ticket touts, one group has managed to make some money out of the world cup. With all the temporary seating required at overwhelmed county grounds, scaffolding companies are tipped to show greatly increased profits this year.

## Plugged In

**FA CUP FINAL**
**(ITV 12 noon; Sky Sports 2, 12 noon)**

A rare head-to-head clash between terrestrial and satellite broadcasters, as Newcastle and Manchester United clash in, respectively, their 13th and 15th finals. ITV field Clive Tyldesley and Ron Atkinson up front against Sky's twice-weekly stalwarts Martin Tyler and Andy Gray, but are expected to struggle as usual at the back, where Bob Wilson, Terry Venables and John Barnes lack the blarney of Sky's regular kibitzers, including George Best and Rodney Marsh.

**TV listings, Sunday Times**

*An occasional column devoted to cross-media plugs masquerading as news.*

## KOSOVO CAMPAIGN MEDALS

### Best Sense of Priorities

*Serbian military accused of animal atrocities*

…Although at present no animals have been flooding into Albania, the WSPA team carried out numerous interviews with refugees from Kosovo and were told of many horrifying cases of animal cruelty… Large numbers of pets and livestock have been left behind in Kosovo, and a journalist who recently returned from Pristina informed WSPA that dogs and cats are roaming the city's streets, with abandoned animals left in many surrounding villages…

— Press release from the World Society for the Protection of Animals

## IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER

WE'VE GOT YOU A SURVIVAL KIT FOR YOUR KOSOVO ASSIGNMENT, POPPY
WHAT A NICE GESTURE. I WONDER... A BEACON, SODIUM FLARES, FLAK JACKET?
THIS DOLCE & GABBANA TITANIUM SPECTACLE CASE AND DRIES VAN NOTEN KHAKI LINEN SMOCK SHOULD PROVE INVALUABLE IN THE BALKANS!

# DOING THE ROUNDS

## Brain Surgery Special

**"BLAIR plan aims to cut cancer deaths by a fifth" declared the *Times* on 21 May — a headline juxtaposed somewhat ironically with the separate story of "Tumour girl's life saving flight".**

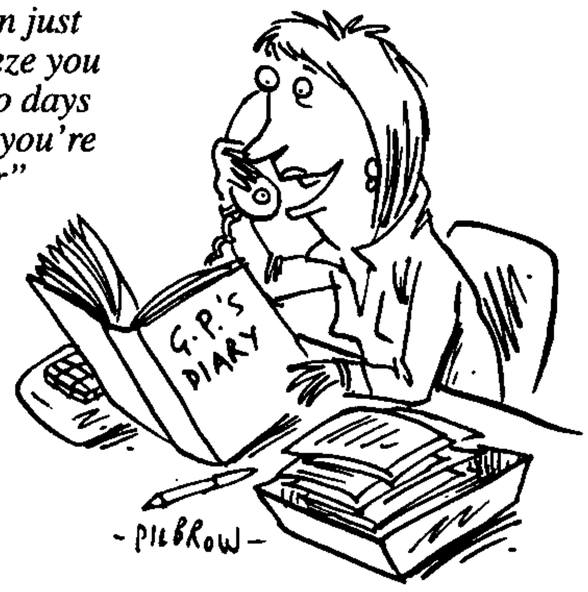
The parents of Holly Crisp, aged 8, raised £40,000 for their daughter to be treated by Patrick Kelly at the New York University Medical Centre because they were unable to find an equivalent standard of neurosurgery in the UK. Their story raises two important questions. Is the standard of UK neurosurgery for childhood brain tumours significantly worse than in America? And if so, do parents and patients have a right to an extra-contractual referral to a centre of proven excellence, funded by the NHS, if they are unable to find an acceptable standard of treatment in their own district or country?

In the UK the campaign to make parents of children with brain tumours aware of the wide variations in treatment success from different centres has been spearheaded by Faye McCluckie. Mrs McCluckie's daughter was deemed to have an inoperable tumour by UK surgeons in 1994. Her consultant at the time agreed that he lacked the expertise to do the operation, but recommended treatment by Prof Kelly in New York. As a result of this recommendation, the NHS funded the cost of the treatment.

Prof Kelly's expertise stems from a number of factors. Not only does he have the latest computer-assisted image guided equipment to aid minimally invasive surgery but, crucially, he has the expertise and experience to use it, operating on some 350 patients a year. In the UK, not only is the equipment sometimes absent or obsolete, but the service has yet to be centralised into a few expert centres. Hence some surgeons do too few of the operations to gain the expertise or produce statistically meaningful results.

As for the longterm survival prospects of the children, a recent study by the Pediatric Brain Tumor Programme in America found that "if the surgeon leaves more than about ¼ teaspoon of detectable tumour, the survival rate drops from 78% to approximately 53%". The best chance of survival is clearly to go to a centre that treats lots of children and openly publishes its results. Alas, your chance of an extra contractual referral if such a service is not

*"I can just squeeze you in two days after you're better"*




available locally depends not on your surgeon's published record of competence, which may not exist, but on his opinion of whether he is capable of attempting the surgery. These are clearly not the same thing.

As with all life threatening treatment, you should ask to see an audit of the results and how they compare nationally and — possibly — internationally. If such information is not forthcoming or is unsatisfactory, you have a strong case with your health authority for an extra-contractual referral to a centre that can prove its competence. For information about neurosurgery for brain tumours, contact Faye McCluckie on faye@roubiliac.demon.co.uk

*M.D.*

# SIGNAL FAILURES

## Young Virgin passengers

**ONE element of Virgin Trains' longterm strategy to cope with overcrowding appears to be to encourage young people to get a driving licence and car as soon after their 17th birthday as possible.**

Last month transport minister Glenda Jackson launched a worrying report which showed that "young people do not see public transport as a friendly environment where they are welcomed". One *Eye* reader in particular would agree after her 15-year-old brother left her home near Oxford on a Sunday evening in April to return — with the help of Virgin Trains — to his parents' home in Rugeley.

He phoned from Oxford station because he had lost his wallet, but the parents were told over the phone by a station clerk that the boy should join the train without a ticket, which would be paid for later by the family. They were assured the ticket inspector would not eject him from the train.

Half an hour later the boy rang to say that the Virgin ticket inspector *had* ejected him from the train. He was at Leamington Spa, and the train which had just vanished into the cold night was the last of the day. His parents paid £100 for a taxi to rescue him. "What made me furious was that he was just a kid," said the reader.

Another teenager fared little better even though he had bought a ticket, from Oban to West Yorkshire. His parents drove to fetch him when it became clear Virgin was unable to get him home, but Virgin, rejecting his request for a refund, said it would give him "travel vouchers for £0.00" (see *Eye* 962).

A reader from Edinburgh was uneasy about her 13-year-old daughter travelling alone to Leamington Spa this summer. Before booking the ticket the mother asked if the guard would keep an eye on her child during the journey. She was put through to Virgin's disabled travellers' advice line, where an official thought her request ridiculous. As if to make doubly sure the child would not encumber Virgin with her presence, he told the mother that a girl had been raped on a Virgin train at Doncaster. "I know whose trains to avoid from now on," the mother told the *Eye*.

But it is not just frontline staff who want to alienate young people. Virgin's policy is to raise by more than the rate of inflation the price of SuperSaver tickets — once ideal for youngsters as they were cheap, flexible and discounted for student-railcard holders. The next best option, the Saver ticket, has been undermined by new restrictions. Virgin wants people to buy its own book-ahead tickets (because other train firms do not take a cut from the revenue) but has withheld discounts to young railcard holders on most of them.

Virgin's London to Manchester service links cities with vibrant youth cultures and large student populations, but now the SuperSaver is banned from more trains than it is valid on. Youngsters wanting to leave London after 3pm and before 7pm would have to pay £85 return (£129 without a railcard), because Virgin prefers to exclude less well off people from its trains than hire enough carriages to meet daily demand. Perhaps the student loan system could be extended to cover Virgin train tickets — or to buy a car, of course.

*'Dr B. Ching'*

# Down on the Fish Farm

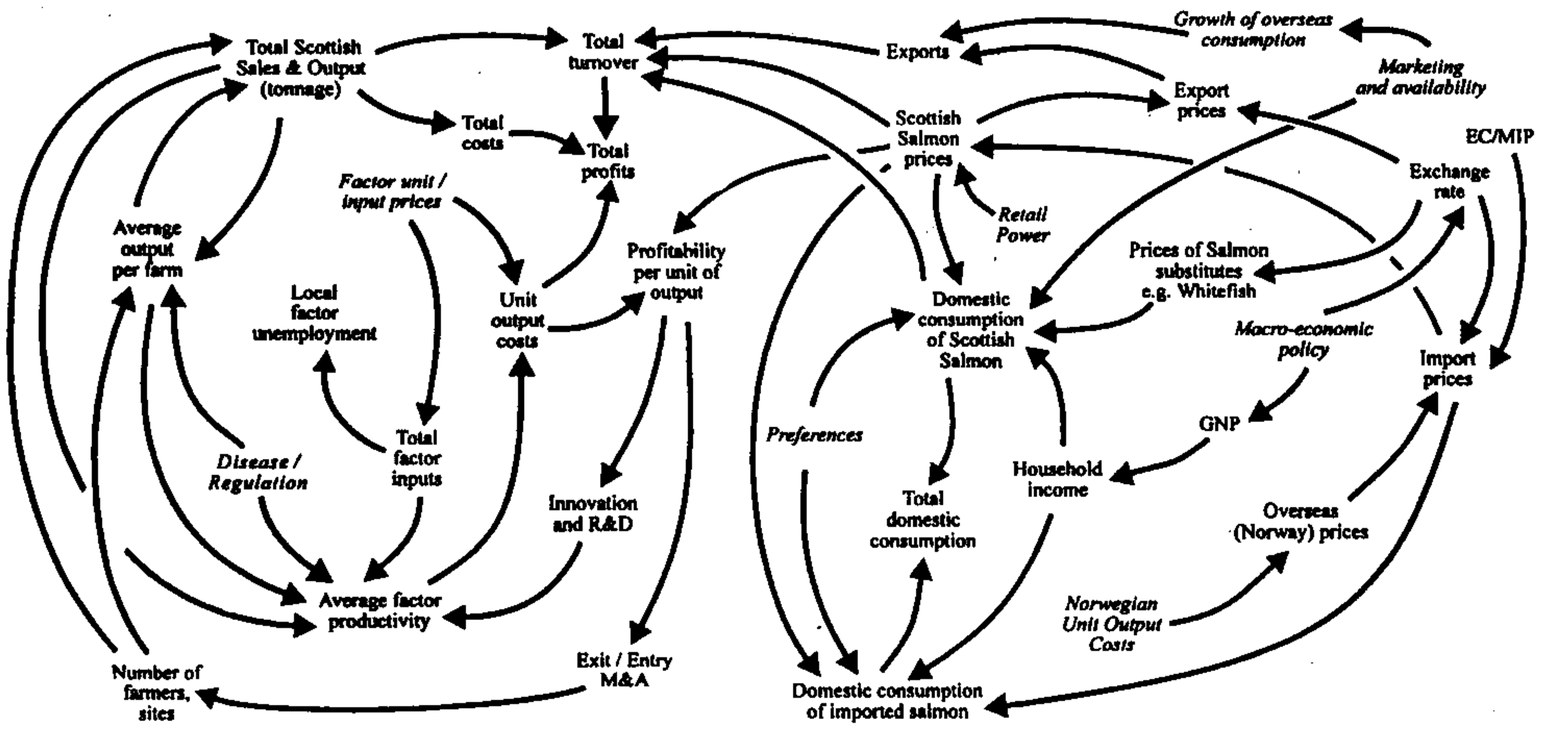
**ON an attempt to justify wasting £30m of taxpayers' cash to help fish farmers muck up Scotland's marine environment and kill wild fish, the Scottish office (SO) and Highlands & Islands Enterprise (HIE) have published a research paper: *The Economic Impact of Scottish Salmon Farming* (see accompanying chart).**

Scottish secretary Donald "duck" Dewar, and HIE chairman Jim "crofter" Hunter welcomed the report. Dewar said: "This study demonstrates the major contribution salmon farming makes to remoter areas of Scotland." Hunter claimed: "Salmon farming plays a vital role in the economy of the Highlands and Islands."

Neither mentioned that the report is based entirely on information collated prior to the outbreak in May 1998 of the salmon killer disease ISA, or infectious salmon anaemia (see *Eyes passim*). Since then 75 percent of the industry has been quarantined, four million farm fish slaughtered and hundreds of jobs lost.

Nor has Dewar, now Head Boy in the Scottish parliament, made mention of any action to save wild fish from extinction. What is clear, however, is that the SO is still beavering away on behalf of its fish farm chums, helping them find disease-free sites in which to rear their seriously "medicated" pseudo-salmon.

The SO also leaked a Price Waterhouse report on proposals to compensate salmon farmers with £9m for having to slaughter ISA-infected stock. The report suggests much more money should be paid. One SO official, Ian Gordon, who made the mistake of saying there were no grounds for paying the fish farmers a single penny, has been "moved" — south to SO HQ at Dover Sole *(shurely "House"? Ed.)* in London.




*Dog fish's breakfast:* 'A conceptual framework of the Scottish salmon farming industry' — *The Economic Impact of Scottish Salmon Farming.*

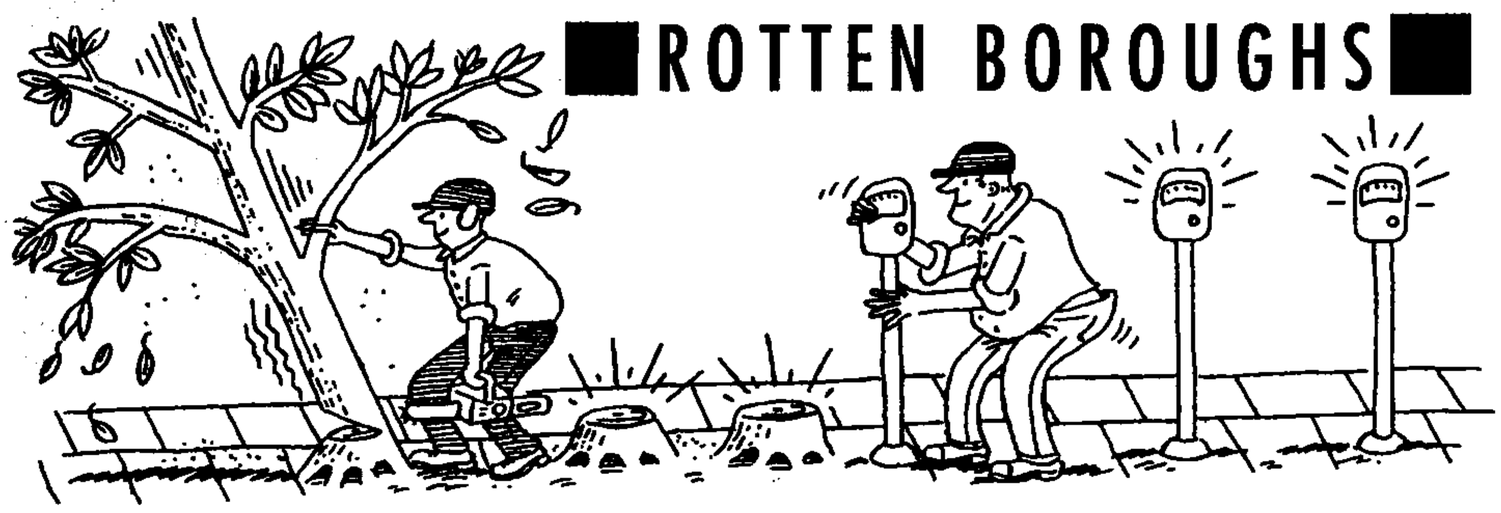
● Fish farmers have been busy too. A recent newspaper report trumpeted their latest ploy: "Orkney Salmon goes organic... a salmon hatchery and two salmon farms in Orkney are the first farms in the UK to be officially recognised as organic by the Soil Association." This is not so.

Dr Lindsay Laird, of Aberdeen University, front person for the new Organic Fish Producers Association, confirms they are only "working" with the Soil Association. They have yet to reach full agreement on standards and practices. At present, fish from these farms will be classified as "transitional organic salmon".

A background paper, *Fish Farming and Organic Standards*, produced by the Soil Association, shows no understanding of the issues involved. The document reads as if it were written by the fish farmers themselves: "There are clearly some compromises that have to be made in defining organic standards... these are within adequate bounds and do not conflict with the general principals that underline organic food and farming." Who are they trying to fool? And could someone explain why a senior Aberdeen academic is so closely involved? Does the university receive funding from the fish farmers?

Meanwhile Sir William Lithgow's company Landcatch, Scotland's largest producer of salmon smolts (immature salmon), is merrily "tinkering" away in its genetics laboratory in Argyll. The company claims: "By using the latest in molecular DNA fingerprinting technology... it is intended that the performance of farmed Atlantic salmon will be maximised." No doubt this will lead to Soil Association approval for "transitional genetically modified organic salmon" — coming to a supermarket near you soon.

*'Old Trout'*



# ROTTEN BOROUGHS

## PAEDO-FILE ALERT

HELPING Inspector Knacker investigate claims of abuse in Lambeth council-run children's homes (see *Eye* 965) is a team headed by social worker Helen Kenwood, which has set out to trace up to 4,000 children who were in the care of social services over the last 25 years.

It reports directly to Lambeth chief executive Heather Rabbatts Alas, many of Lambeth's files needed to trace the children turn out either to be lost or to have been doctored.

Embarrassingly for the Met, its own files concerning the case of a Lambeth child care worker, Leslie Paul, jailed after being found guilty of sexually abusing three boys in 1994 – which could have thrown up clues useful to the current investigation — have also gone missing.

Meanwhile the inquiry by John Barrett into former careworker Steven Forrest, who died of Aids having allegedly abused children in his care at Angell Road children's home, has led to the suspension of the assistant director for children and families (care) division, Pennie Pennie. A co-founder of the black social workers' group, Pennie was suspended after Barrett pointed out to Rabbatts that staff concerns about possible child abuse in homes for which she had responsibility had seemingly fallen on deaf ears.

In a separate development, Rabbatts recently declined to recommend the renewal of the contract of director of social services, Celia Pyke-Lees. Frankly, who can blame her?

## MOULDING THE BREAK

HATS off to Cllr Mick Moulding, Britain's least consistent councillor. He has changed political allegiance four times in just over a year.

As the *Eye* went to press, Cllr Moulding was sitting as a Liberal Democrat on Preston borough council — but that may have changed by the time you read this.

Moulding began as a member of the Labour party but changed sides and was elected to Preston council as a Liberal Democrat in May 1998. For a good six months he was the scourge of the then ruling Labour group. Suddenly, in January this year, he declared himself "a true socialist" and rejoined Labour — evidently under the mistaken impression that the Labour party still had something to do with socialism. Moulding now became the scourge of the... Lib-Dems, who duly declared they were well rid of him.

The day after this year's council elections, however, Moulding quit Labour for a second time and said he was going "Independent". This meant that Labour lost control of the council. Days later he said he was resigning his seat to give the electorate a chance to judge him in a by-election. When it became clear that voters would probably take a dim view of spending some £3,000 on an election at the behest of a man with the political commitment of a Twiglet, he changed his mind yet again and said he would respect the democratic wishes of voters who elected him in May '98 as – what was it? — a Lib Dem.

## FORGING AHEAD

JUST a year ago, in *Eye* 951, we reported how Inspector Knacker was investigating allegations that Lib-Dem election leaflets delivered to homes in Winchester during last year's local elections had broken the law by purporting to be "an important message from Tony Blair".

The leaflets, apparently from the Labour party and urging Labour voters to vote tactically in favour of the Lib Dems to keep the Tories out, were in fact produced by Jason Sutton, researcher for Winchester Lib Dem MP Mark Oaten. After interviewing Sutton and Lib Dem agent Harvey Cole, Knacker sent a file to the crown prosecution service (CPS), which, after several months' cogitation, has decided to take... no action.

An apparently irritated Inspector K — Hampshire assistant chief constable Peter Jones — has written to Cole and Sutton warning them about the "potentially misleading" leaflet, saying they must behave themselves in future or else.

● **MEANWHILE former Labour councillor Pat Mullany has written to the great and the good in Doncaster urging them to write character references for him to Judge Linda Sutcliffe.**

**The judge is due to pass sentence on him later this month after he pleaded guilty at Doncaster crown court on 27 May (see *Eye* 977) to 11 charges of falsifying expenses to the tune of nearly £1,400. Four out of five Labour councillors previously convicted on similar charges arising out of the Donnygate scandal have been jailed.**

**The unrelated case of the council's chief executive, Alf Roberts, charged with failing to declare an election expense over £21,000 spent on the pro-Labour *Agenda For Change* leaflet, will now be heard at crown court later this year.**

## THE MARK OF THE BEAST

NEWHAM council chief executive Wendy Thomson may well feel relieved to be leaving for a new job at the audit commission in September, for it will extract her from a poisonous dispute between "new" and "old" Labour in the borough.

The council's Labour group is studying a report by Richard Drabble QC which accuses Blairite councillor Chris Rackley of acting in a "vindictive" manner. Newham's new "cabinet" commissioned the report after a by-election in Rackley's Custom House and Silvertown ward last July. Rival "Real Labour" candidate Ray Hollands withdrew after Rackley – who rejoices in the nickname "the Beast of Bemerside" — accused him of electoral fraud on account of a technical error in his nomination. Hollands was then sacked from his job as a council truck driver by Thomson, allegedly at Rackley's behest.

Representatives of the Transport and General Workers' Union complained that Rackley had threatened to have another three of their members sacked. Still not satisfied, Rackley lodged a complaint against Holland which resulted in a special branch investigation, and Hollands' arrest in February. He was released after the CPS advised Knacker against taking further action. Now the Labour group must consider whether the Beast took his anti-lefty zeal a teeny bit too far.

● **RESIDENTS of an old folks' home near Rhondda Cynon Taff council's HQ in Pentre often used to complain of "noisy goings on" late at night when some municipal triumph was being celebrated. When Plaid Cymru kicked out Labour in May, the oldies hoped for a more sober regime. A few days after they took control, shocked Plaid councillors discovered a locked storeroom containing £2,000-worth of booze ordered for the mayor's "hospitality fund", and said they intended to auction the lot for charity. Commendably puritanical – except that one of the first actions of Graeme Beard, the new council chairman, was to lay on a drinks party for his mates!**

# Pseuds Corner

**A United victory over Bayern would represent an achievement without precedent, a moment to shake the world, to stop the clock and embroider time itself with the silken threads that distinguish the team of all teams.**

**JOHN SADLER**
**The Sun**

While the pampered impalas and burnished snow-leopards of the United squad had proceeded south by Concorde, a dawn start saw me in the departure lounge with the other patrons of Sports Mondial plc's 'private charter' to the Nou Camp... The crowd is the engine of this experience. It is asking something of you: the surrender of your identity. And it will not be opposed. It cannot be opposed. The crowd is a wraparound millipede of rage and yearning, with the body heat of 180,000 torched armpits, with its ear-hurting roars, and that incensed whistling like a billion babies joined in one desperate scream... The powerless man, by giving his identity to the Jupiter of the crowd, has helped administer this slaughter. Soon he must return to the confines of his mere individuality. But for 90 minutes – 90 seconds – he has known prepotence.

**MARTIN AMIS reporting on**
**Man U v. Bayern, Observer**

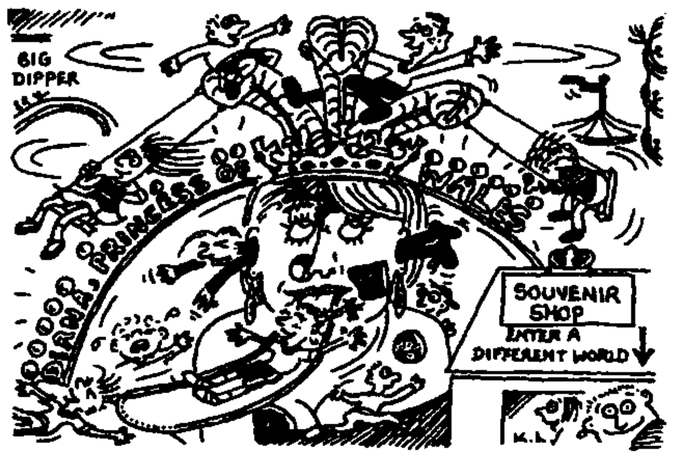
**When you get a tattoo and feel that indescribable pain and then watch your blood dry, you know, for certain, that you are flesh and blood, that you are not a hologram of a woman. And, afterwards, for weeks, you have to clean the wound three times a day, smother it in ointment and moisturiser, look after your ugly body as if you loved yourself.**

**If Princess Diana had been a few years younger, as well as cutting her arms and throwing up, she would have got herself a tattoo. Maybe a heart on her ankle, something pretty, because she felt so ugly.**

**Even the process of dyeing your hair is a minor example of the female body as canvas for fear and loathing. One is not quite sure what one's hair colour is, mousy or many-coloured, or simply not right. So we make it definite – black or blond, red, purple or blue. But dye fades, transient as love. Tattoos fade, too, but they are forever and ever.**

**EMMA FORREST**
**Guardian Weekend**

The design for the playground is required to create an outstanding, innovative play environment which




caters not just for children's physical development but also provides opportunities for a wider range of play types (eg, symbolic, socio-dramatic, social creative, communication, exploratory, fantasy, imaginative, locomotor, mastery, object, role and dramatic play).

**From Royal Parks Agency document inviting tenders for "A Playground Dedicated to Diana, Princess of Wales"**

**"I feel that Star Wars does more for the civilised development of the human race than any other piece of art in the world."**

**BRIAN BLESSED**
**Sunday Times**

CONTRIBUTORS: Ciaran Ward, John Sims, Carol Seymour-Newton, M.G. Sherlock.

**£10 paid for entries**

# Letters

## Travels with my Aunty

*Sir,*

*I really must protest at your assertion (Media News, Eye 977) that the plug for L. Ron Hubbard's "What is Scientology?" is the only advertisement that BBC World TV has ever carried.*

*As a regular viewer in Saudi Arabia (you think BBC World is dire — you should see Saudi Channel 2), I am bombarded by advertisements whenever I watch. You see, BBC World has varied programming, depending on the region it's broadcast to. And, as everyone knows, Saudi Arabia is a part of the Indian subcontinent - well, nearly, if you glance quickly at a very small scale map.*

*So we get endless ads for Indian made "suitings", Indian made motor oils and currently, car tyres, none of which are actually on sale here, probably fortunately in the case of the tyres, given the already murderous road accident rate on Saudi roads.*

*The ads are bad; the programmes made specifically for India are even worse, and of course being a news channel, the few other feature programmes shown are often broken into with "Breaking News" items. Recently "Holiday" was stopped about 10 minutes before the next hourly news fix to inform viewers that Sonia Gandhi had decided after all to withdraw her resignation as leader of the Indian Congress Party.*

*So a merger with News 24 can't be all bad - it can't make things worse, can it? No, surely not ... Oh really? Shit! Enough to drive one back to World Service radio, but the decline of that is another sad story...*

*Regards,*
*DICK HADEN,*

*Via e-mail.*

*Sir,*

*Feeling a bit like the Major in Fawlty Towers compelled to defend it against the charge by an enraged guest that it was the worst hotel in world ("Nooo I won't stand for that — there's a place in Torquay..."), I refer to your piece about BBC World (Eye 977).*

*I had just finished reading it and returned to my hotel room only to find that channel showing an entirely engrossing interview with Jim Swire — one of a daily interview series hosted by Tim Sebastian — quite the best of its kind on any channel, anywhere. Ok, so the other stuff between the news is a bit bland – much like the rest of BBC really, but I would hesitate to call it "diabolical". Compared to the pisspoor American tripe served up on most other channels it actually isn't that bad.*

*MR A.O. VAN EMMENIS,*

*Cambridge.*

*Sir,*

*I feel I must write concerning your denigration of "the pisspoor BBC World". It all depends where you are watching from.*

*Here in France I have the choice of five TV channels which seem to regard international news as something to be relegated to the last two minutes of a broadcast. Thanks to a dish I can also receive Sky News — enough said — and BBC World. On BBC World I can get more international news in five minutes than in all the others put together.*

*Yes, it certainly isn't perfect, but then nothing is, not even the Eye. Mind you, BBC radio's World Service is even better, but that's another story.*

*Yours faithfully,*
*IAN COOPER,*

*France.*

## Lookalike

**Nero**

**Boris**

*Sir,*

*Have any of your readers noticed a resemblance between the great and good Emperor Nero, as pictured in bust form in the Daily Telegraph of 20 May 1999, and right-wing Daily Telegraph columnist Bore-us Johnson?*

*Are they by any chance related? And does Emperor Bore-us fiddle while huge piles of unsold Daily Torygraphs burn?*

*WILLIE MORRISON,*

*Inverness.*

## Loan derangers

*Sir,*

*Student loans make me angrier than almost anything else you care to mention, so I was surprised to see you wondering why anyone would want to invest in the Student Loan Company. It seems perfectly obviously to me: a captive market getting bigger every year, no overheads, no investment costs to reduce profits, nothing to do but rake in the cash. And the really clever part is that the less you earn, the more you pay! The perfect capitalist enterprise! I currently owe them £4,000 odd and counting. I wrote to them in September last year stating I wished to start repaying on my salary of 6,500 francs (I live in France) a month to avoid paying huge amounts of interest. No reply for seven months. Now it turns out that I would have to pay to get them to take my francs. And the interest is still mounting. I shall be voting Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire in the next elections. (Only joking, Mum.)*

*Yours,*
*SUSAN PICKFORD,*

*Via e-mail.*

## Colemanballs-up

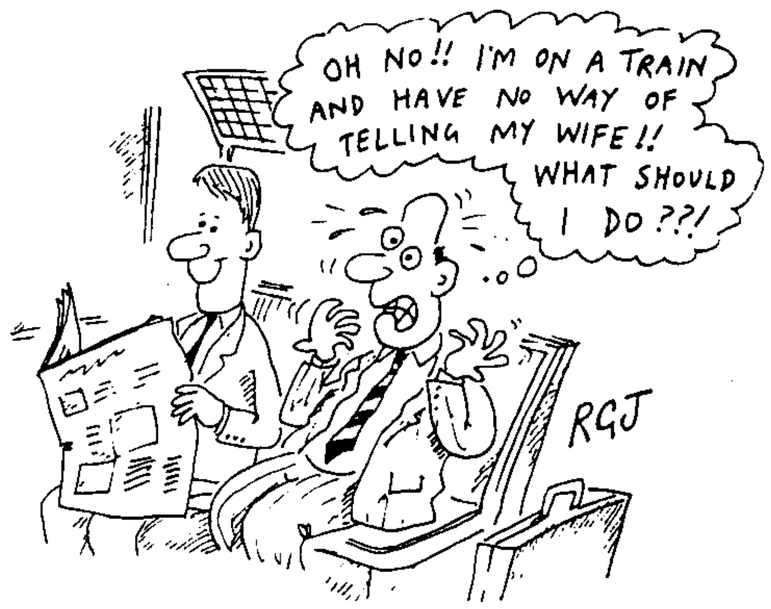
*Sir,*

*Big Ron may have been utterly useless as Neasden manager, but he is not such a bad TV commentator. His claim that Man Utd were in a better position at 2-1 down than when they started the game at 1-1 is not as dumb as it sounds, and certainly does not qualify for Colemanballs (Eye 976). The statement was made when Utd were 2-1 down to Juventus in the second, away leg of their European Cup semi-final. Under the away-goal rule Juventus were effectively ahead after the 1-1 draw at Old Trafford. When Utd were 2-1 down in the second leg in Turin they may not have been in a better position, but they were certainly not in a worse position. A second, equalising goal (which soon followed, in fact) would have effectively put Utd ahead under the away-goal rule.*

*I think the honourable course would be for you to send 10 pounds as compensation to Big Ron so that he can buy a couple of cigars.*

*Yours sincerely,*
*PAUL MAYLAM,*

*Via e-mail.*




**Life Before Mobile Phones**

## Own goal?

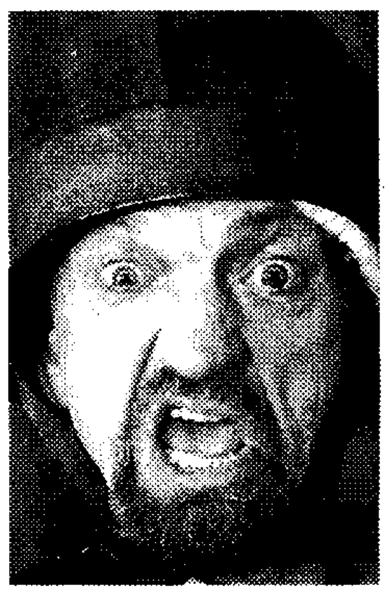
*Sir,*

*The Eye's ignorance about football is well noted, but isn't Square Eyes supposed to know about television? Jimmy Hill was a pundit on Match of the Day, not The Big Match as you seem to think (Eye 977).*

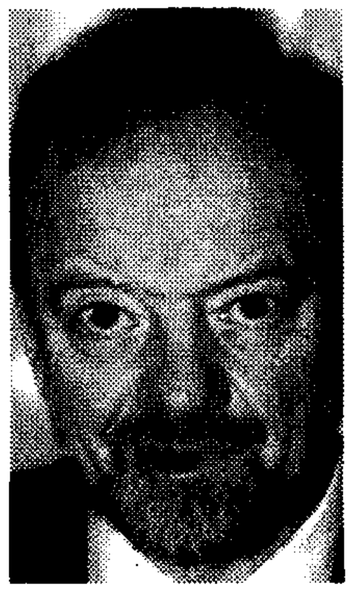
*Yours faithfully,*
*JAMES TUMBLER,*

*Lancaster, Lancs.*

## Lookalike



**Cook**



**McEnery**

*Sir,*

*Do any of your readers agree there is more than a passing resemblance between foreign secretary Robin Cook, photographed here in negotiations with the Serb leadership before the start of the bombing campaign, and accomplished Shakespearean actor John McEnery?*

*Yours,*
*BRIAN WARREN,*

*Maidstone, Kent.*

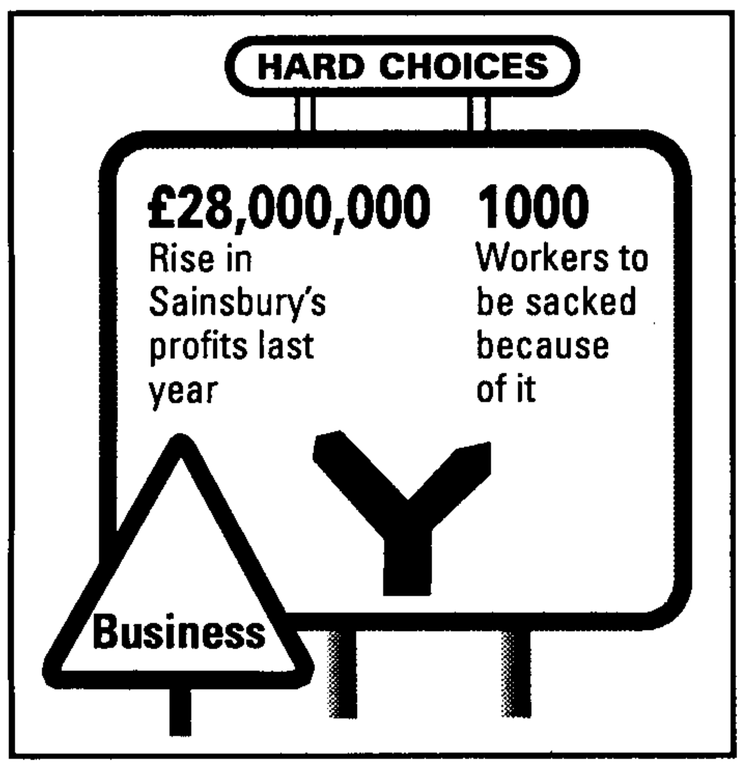
## SUPERMODELS

KERBER

## I-SPY

***New Orleans***

**Submitted by Catherine Conway-Briggs.** £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*



## Photo opportunity

*Sir,*

*I feel sure you will be among those to castigate the Sun for their publication of the infamous Chris Tarrant/Sophie Rhys-Jones picture.*

*Given the Eye's high standards, I know you would never publish a picture of a well-known media figure frolicking with an attractive young girl half his age.*

*Yours etc,*
*TERENCE LARKIN,*

*Via e-mail.*

## Dallaglio imbroglio

*Sir,*

*I have heard the News of the World being criticised for digging the dirt on the Dallaglio story. It was said that there were no winners in a story like this. I beg to differ. The England rugby squad has been preparing for an intensive tour of Australia. Losing their captain at the last minute is hardly conducive to the tour's success. It's all rather reminiscent of Bobby Moore in Mexico 1970.*

*The News of the World is (as I recall) owned by News International which is in turn owned by that well-known sports enthusiast and Australian patriot Rupert Murdoch. He likes sport so much he has his own channel, Sky Sports. Sky Sports is covering the tour. Maybe his ability to influence UK elections has gone to his head. Certainly there is a rumour afoot that the News of the World had a team out digging dirt on the unfortunate Dallaglio for some time.*

*Perhaps the Aussies need some morale boosting following their recent cricket displays? All I can say is that there are better ways to get it.*

*Let us hope that our rugby teams are not as supine as our politicians.*

*Yours sincerely,*
*JOHN A.W. LOCK,*

*London SW16.*

## Fugging Hell!

*Sir,*

*I enclose a copy of a cartoon from Vol. XIII of the "New Punch Library", called "Mr Punch in Holiday Mood". The date seems to be somewhere in the 1920s, before the present proprietor took over.*

*Yours faithfully,*
*J.B. READER,*

*Lea, Preston.*

DAUGHTER *(to parents who have taken refuge in shelter on sea-front).* "Oh, do come along out! Don't stop fugging indoors all day."

## A Fayed country?

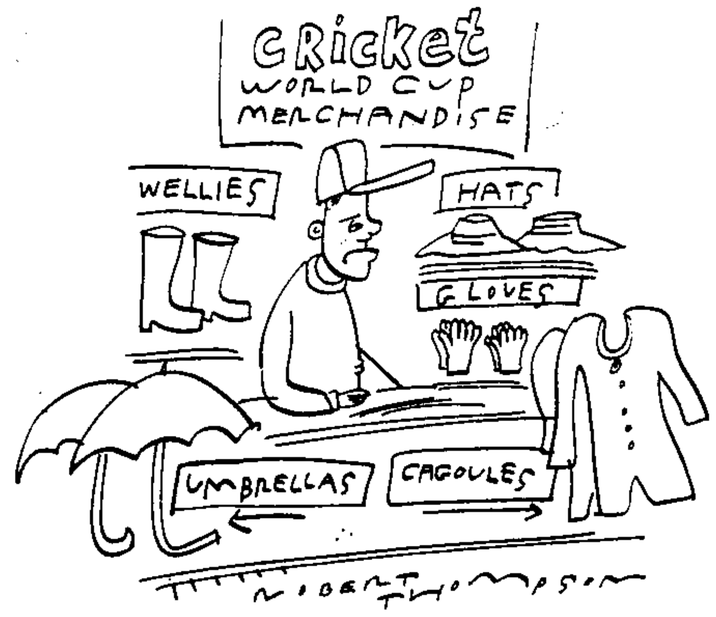
*Sir,*

*When criticising Rupert Murdoch you rightly assume that Eye readers agree that his products are crap and are therefore sympathetic to your criticism of him.*

*What the Eye doesn't seem to realise is that most Eye readers don't shop at Harrods, don't read Punch and are not Fulham football supporters. Your constant sniping at Mohamed Fayed is not only irrelevant and unfunny, but underlines the fact that an Arab in Britain can never do any right no matter how hard he tries.*

*Yours,*
*S. ROBERTS,*

*Bowden.*




## Record breaker?

*Sir,*

*Is this the same Martin Clarke (Eye 977), Editor-in-Chief of the Scottish Daily Record, a newspaper by some accounts, whose reply to my polite letter to him about his much-advertised scam to increase his rag's circulation I have yet to receive?*

*Maybe he was too busy counting the coupons from hapless weans to bother to reply to my letter to him. (Perhaps I deserved being ignored as I don't read his tabloid trash.)*

*You obviously "touched a nerve" in your columns for Clarke to respond so strongly, and so quickly? Maybe you just got some facts right, eh?*

*Never mind the persiflage of this sad "debate" about which school won. To me, that's beside the point. I'd limit my comments to:*

*Why were Scottish primary school children, their parents and teachers used as "marketing fodder" to increase the circulation of a newspaper?*

*Does anyone believe that the Record actually employed staff to count the many thousands of coupons sent in from all the schools who took part?*

*If Martin Clarke can answer these two simple questions to my satisfaction, then I'll believe that the Record is a newspaper...*

*Sincerely,*
*IAIN McDOUGALL,*

*Coatbridge.*

*Sir,*

*The letter from Mr Clark (Eye 977) has a somewhat self-parodying nature. Despite pointing out that a total of 208 pupils are going to spend a "week in the sun", he admits that these are from the "top 11" schools. Giving an average of 19 pupils from each school. How generous are the Mirror Group? Er, not very.*

*Yours sincerely,*
*ALEX JAGGER,*

*Via e-mail.*

## Colemanballs

*£10 paid for contributions*

**Interviewer**: *So why do you paint some things yellow, some things red and some things green?*
**Artist**: *Because I'm a painter.*
**Channel 4**
(Robert G. Brew)

*"Kevin Francis can't help being 6 foot 7 – he was born that way."*
**PETER RHOADES-BROWN, BBC Thames Valley FM**
(Dan Smith)

*"OK Julie, now pick me a number – A, B, C or D?"*
**LORRAINE KELLY, ITV**
(Peter Leslie)

*"He couldn't quite wrap his head around the ball."*
**CLIVE TYLDESLEY, ITV**
(Martin Kennedy)

*"We'll have to hurry through this, Tom. No hurry, you just take your time."*
**SIMON MAYO, Radio 1**
(Simon J. Whyld)

## HOM SAP

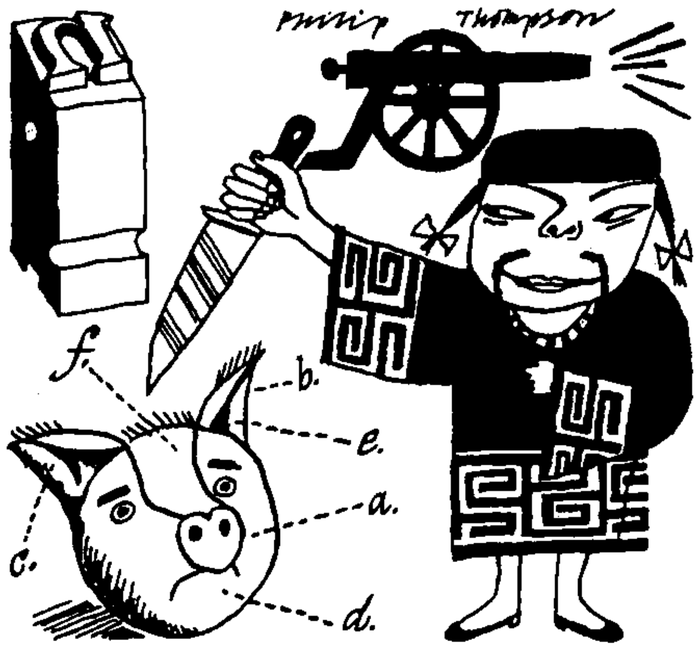
AUSTIN

# FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

**"What could be tastier for lunch than a whole pig's head, yellow teeth and all, cooked for twelve hours in our blend of thirty herbs and spices, and served piping hot with piglet-shaped dumplings as a garnish, and noodles hanging out of the earholes and nostrils?" asked Shen Qing, as he welcomed Western reporters to his Baked Pig Face restaurant at Beijing airport. "And if you want side dish, why not try some delicious roast ox penis, and wash it down with a mug of frothy beer laced with pig blood?"**

**In an attempt to counter the recent invasion of Beijing by McDonald's and Kentucky Fried Chicken, Shen Qing has opened seven Baked Pig Face restaurants in the capital during the past**




**year, all serving the same meal. "Look at my happy customers, each hunched over a steaming plate of hog's head, split in half and laid side-down on a platter. Connoisseurs eat just about every part of the head – cheeks, eyes, snout, lips, tongue, brains and squeak. The brains are the most nourishing part of the dish, you know, because they make you smarter.**

**"We sell more than five thousand pig faces each month, you know, and business is booming. Look at my waitresses, all wearing caps with the Pig Face logo on it, and helping customers to roll their little pancakes around the meat. The herbs we use to cook the meat cut through the grease and aid digestion, you know. It's all very scientific. Remember, we Chinese invented gunpowder and movable type, you know, then saw you foreigners steal the ideas and claim them as your own, but never again. I have already patented this dish, you know, so now you can only sell it if you buy a franchise, you know."** *(The Globe and Mail [Toronto], 15/5/99. Spotter: Wallace Brown)*

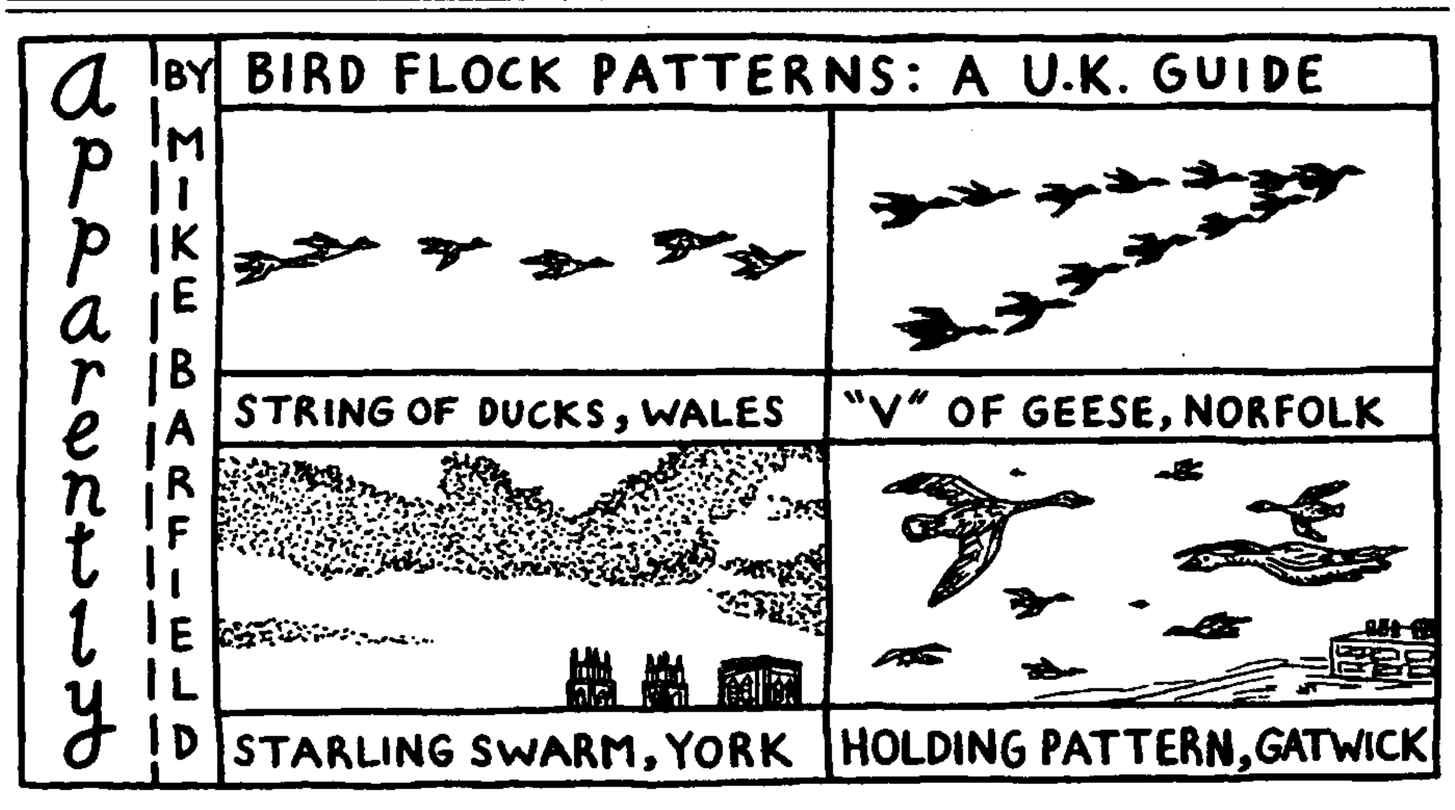
—●—

● "KLM Royal Dutch Airlines offers its most sincere apologies to animal lovers and to all those offended by recent events" said KLM spokesman Joessef Eddiei in an unprecedented public statement. "We made a grave ethical mistake when we threw four hundred and forty live Chinese squirrels into a shredding machine, and we deserve criticism from the public and from animal rights groups. However, we had little choice, because they had been shipped illegally to Schiphol airport from China, and arrived without proper documentation. And it may sound strange, but dropping the squirrels into a commercial poultry shredder was actually the most humane way to destroy them. They felt no more pain than you or I would, were we thrown into a shredder." *(Brisbane Courier Mail, 17/4/99. Spotter: Norm Reynolds)*

—●—

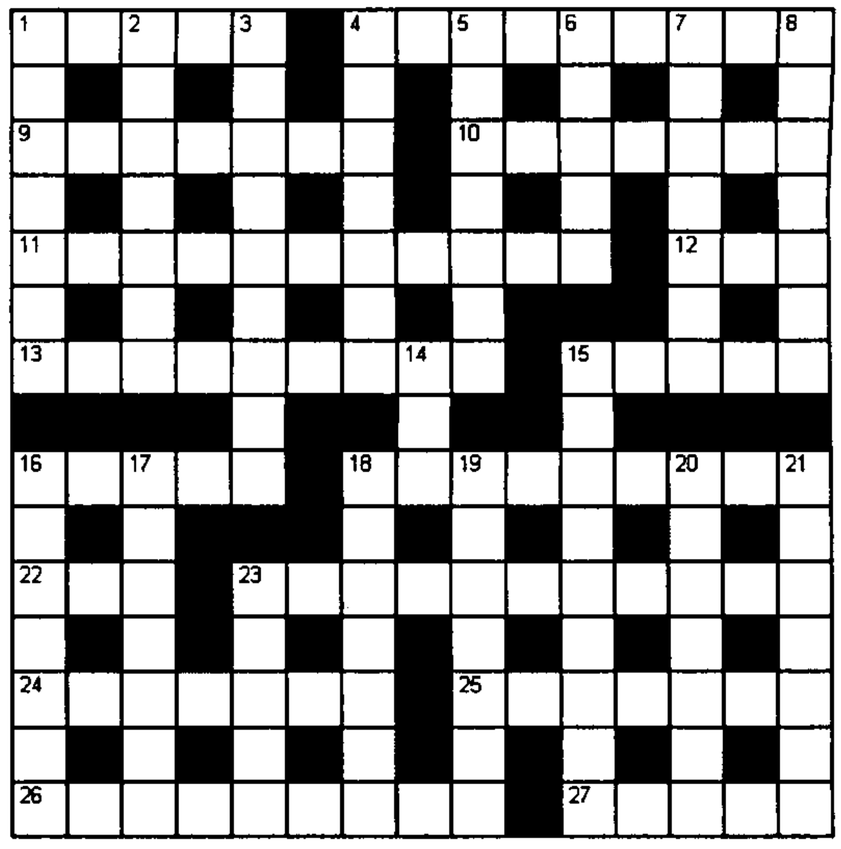
● *"The police were called to Whangarei Ward at the Aged Care Centre in Kaikohe because a fight had broken out," Senior Sergeant Maurice Loveridge told a New Zealand court, "and when they arrived, they could see that the two elderly accused men had just been involved in an almighty punch up. Both were covered in blood, their clothes were torn, one had a broken nose and half his hair ripped out, and the other one had a broken arm and a hypodermic needle stuck into his penis. Furniture and equipment had been smashed flat, beds had been overturned, and the other patients on the ward were all terrified.*

*"However, the fight took place in a ward full of elderly Alzheimer's patients, and it has gradually become clear that nobody can remember what happened, or who was responsible. One patient keeps repeating the phrase 'we ought to have more manure', but frankly that gives us no clue. The two accused men do not recognise each other, nor do the other patients, and the ones who initially reported the incident to us had forgotten that there even was a fight by the time we tried to question them. Therefore, because nobody can now recall the incident, the Police Prosecution Department has reluctantly decided to withdraw the case against both men."* (Southland Times [New Zealand], 25/2/99. Spotter: Paul Bigland)




# EYE CROSSWORD 133

by Cyclops — *£100 prize*



ACROSS

1 Dobson reportedly ready for the Swiss? (5)
4 Archer's front and superior lip (6,3)
9 (see 17)
10 RUC tire out rookie (7)
11 Operetta inaccessible to many if Jack has his way (5,2,4)
12 Former government dept's fast breeder (3)
13 Perhaps Chelsea type holiday accommodation presented to Brenda (9)
15 Legislators and where they play with balls, etc. (5)
16 Pissed but not lashing out (5)
18 About to get limp – that makes a change for certain ministers! (9)
22 Bill accepted Monica finally getting caught (3)
23 Military force failing disastrously? That's what this amounts to so often (4,7)
24 Reserved, Elton or Derek somewhat (2,5)
25 Boring comedian's act (7)
26 Gay holding cane perversely is not doing it for love (9)
27 She'd love getting screwed wearing stockings (5)

DOWN

1 Smooth writer fondled to the end (4-3)
2 Gail, wantonly grasped by another girl, gets some old-fashioned English tongue (7)
3 Agreeable schedule helps to keep Brenda and co. going ... (5,4)
4 ... keep going to indulge in illicit sex (5,2)
5 Stalker introduces head of police (city) to plaintiff (7)
6 Queer penis pressed against Lewinsky's butt (5)
7 What an arse to jump Brenda (7)
8 Observe comedian getting head (7)
14 Behold a great organ before you (3)
15 Windbag makes flamboyant kisser (4-5)
16 Rent low (but rising) from where our saucy columnist reports (7)
17/9 Roger, clear the hurdle (3,4,3,4)
18 Bollocks attached to ring by Rugby Union, note, in this region, down under (7)
19 Flipping outsize Beryl dithered like a judge (7)
20 Good spellers, homosexuals, without resorting to PC (7)
21 Intellectual what's got laid by boss! (7)
23 For example Brown is up for a poke (5)

**£100 prize to first solution opened on 18.6.99. Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.**

## Solution to Crossword No. 132

**Winner: NICHOLAS D. COATS**

ACROSS: 1 Cut up 4 Kerb-crawl 9 Demonic 10 All ears 11/12 Welsh Assembly 12 (see 11) 14 Lurches 16 Point to 17 Objects 20 Hatchet 22 Showdown 23/18 Boris Johnson 25 Desktop 26 Oratory 27 Sandhurst 28 Riser.

DOWN: 1 Codswallop 2 Tumbler 3 Punch 4 Kick ass 5 Rears up 6 Columnist 7 A bad lot 8 Lush 13 Soothsayer 15 Hackwatch 18 (see 23 ac.) 19 Snooper 20 Hang out 21 Harrods 23 Blair 24 Odes.

# GLENDA SLAGG

**Fleet Street's Honey-Crap *(Surely 'trap'? Ed.)***

**HANDS OFF Lenny Henry, all you sleazy-so-called-journalists!?!?! What's he ever done to deserve this??!?**

**OK, so he had a blonde bimbo in his hotel room and he had a bit of a laugh with some good-time gals at a Lap Dance Club!?!? SO WHAT???!**

**Lenny's a lively lad who likes to live life to the full!??! What kind of hypocrites have we all become when we ruin his marriage just to make a headline and sell a newspaper?? The price on the front page should be thirty pieces of silver!?! Perhaps the Editor should take a leaf out of the Bible and hang himself!?!? Geddit??!** *(It was me. You're fired. Ed.)*

LENNY HENRY – what a skunk!! No wonder poor Dawn is a-weepin' and a-wailin' at his love-rat shenanigans!?! Who do you think you are??! Just 'cos you work for charity doesn't mean you can cheat on your lovely wife, the Vicar of Dibley?!?!

So much for your model showbiz marriage!??! What kind of hypocrite are you Lenny, or should I say *Judas*??? You should go away with your 30 pieces of crumpet and hang yourself!??! *(Much better, but it needs to be even more unpleasant before you're hired again. Ed.)*

**DAWN FRENCH – no wonder your hubby's playing away from home when you are so fat!!! A gal who lets her figure go, has only herself to blame when a responsible newspaper exposes her hubby as a two-timing bonkaholic!?!??**

**Take some well-meant advice from Auntie Glenda, Dawn dearie**

**– lose twenty stone or lose your fella instead?!?** *(Alright, you're hired again. Ed.)*

THREE CHEERS for Dawn French?!?! She's not going to slim down just because the media tell her to!! We love you just the way you are, Dawn – Jumbo sized and Roly-Poly!!! Go on, Dawn, keep eating and prove the world wrong!??! *(You're fired again. Ed.)*

*HERE THEY are, Glenda's Mid-summer Madmen!!?!*

**Paul Scholes** – First England player to be sent off at Wembley! Come and play dirty round at my place, ducks! (Geddit?)

**Huw Edwards** – The BBC's Mr Sex O'Clock News!! Ok, you may be a turn off to the viewers, Taffy, but I think you're to Dai for!?!? Geddit??!?

**Martti Ahtissaari** – Crazy name, crazy guy!!

That's the Finnish – Geddit??!?!

***Byeeeee!***

# NEW-LOOK QUEEN Pt 94

# UNION JACK TO BE REINSTATED AS EMBLEM SHOCK

by Our Political Staff **John Bullshit**

**THE symbol that defines the United Kingdom is to return as the official emblem of British Blairways, it was revealed last night.**

The confusing mish-mash of ethnic emblems sported by the world's favourite Prime Minister has failed to catch the imagination of the public.

## TAIL SPIN

"We had no idea what Blairways stood for," said one fellow traveller.

"I didn't like the Scottish and Welsh designs and the European one with the stars was frankly scary."

But last night a spokesman for British Blairways said, "We have returned to the Union Flag which, of course, we always meant to. The Union Flag says everything about British Blairways, ie it makes people think we are Conservative, which, of course, we are."

He added, "This redesign will take us back to being No.1 in Europe."

# Those Euro Results In Advance

## BIRMINGHAM MIDSHIRES – Rain Stopped Play

**Labour** 31

**Pro-Europe Conservatives** 7

**Anti-Europe Conservatives** 4

**Anti-Pro-Europe Conservatives** 3

**Keep Britain's Cheese Free From Brussels Party** 2

**The NaturaLevitation Floating Voter party** Nul Points

*(Winner: Sweden with their song "England 0 Sweden 0")*

# POETRY CORNER

**In Memoriam**
**Sir Hugh Fish**
So. Farewell
Then
Sir Hugh Fish.

Rivers expert
And man responsible
For putting salmon back
In the Thames.

Did anyone
Ever tell you

How appropriate
Your name was?

E.J.Poet (17½)

# PEACE AGREEMENT LATEST

*"You can't trust him..."*

*"... he won't disarm..."*

*"... his thugs will carry on..".*

*"Good old Gerry Adams!"*

# ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

*Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)*

*Hullo!*

Some of you will be pleased to hear that I'm not going to be writing about the war this week!

Firstly, because I think I have said all that needs to be said on that subject. And, secondly, because I don't want to say "I told you so", just because peace has broken out. (And it *is* peace, even if it still looks like war at the moment. Sometimes they are quite difficult to tell apart!)

Nothing is gained from rubbing people's noses in it, particularly not our friend in Tesco's, who must be feeling pretty silly now that he has been proved to be so wrong on all his points!

Next time I see him by the checkout counter perhaps he will be good enough to offer an unreserved apology for daring to question someone who knows a lot more than he does about this particular issue (and indeed a good many others!).

Not that I have anything against the healthy expression of contrary views in the parish.

I've always made it clear that I welcome everyone having the chance to have their say.

For example, last week Mr Booth, an out-of-work actor who claims to be Cherie's father, saw fit to hold forth in the Britannia Arms at some length, accusing me of watering down our traditional beliefs and doctrines just to curry popularity.

It is tempting to make a cheap riposte and say that possibly Mr Booth should "water down" the contents of glass before sounding off in public! But I will resist that temptation, because nothing is gained by indulging in petty name-calling with a pathetic victim of alcohol abuse who is clearly in need of professional help.

Another example concerns someone who plays a rather more elevated role in parish life, namely the Honorary Life President-Elect of the St Albion's Flower Festival (ie, Prince Charles).

At our recent AGM the Prince made a long-winded and, with respect, ill-informed and self-important speech in which he condemned the use of genetically modified flowers in the church, and claimed to have found a number of dead moths and beetles in the chancel, allegedly the victims of

what he called "the killer GM lilies" which decorated the altar over the recent Festival of Bank Holiday.

Of course, I welcome the Prince's comments as a valuable contribution to the debate on this issue. But may I just say, again with the greatest possible respect, that in future he would be better advised to keep his mouth shut on matters he knows nothing about. Otherwise he could well find that he never succeeds to his mother's job, which is a purely honorary post anyway and certainly does not entitle him to criticise the views of the properly constituted parish authorities, ie the vicar.

On a happier note, I think we can all be justifiably proud of the recent achievements of the Manchester United football team.

Theirs was a superb team effort, showing what you can achieve when you are united behind a strong leader with a vision.

Well done, Alex Ferguson, who I'm very much hoping will be coming to open the St Albion's Summer Fête this year, even though he has refused.

Yours in victory*,

Tony

*2-1 over Milosevic in injury time!

## *To Remember In Your Prayers*

● Mr Mortimer, one of our older parishioners, who is having a crisis of faith and has recently expressed doubts about the way that the modern St Albion's is moving forward in a vibrant and pivotal way.

Let us pray for John at a time when his brain has clearly become fuddled by advancing age, and perhaps a little too much of that champagne which he is so fond of! T.B

## PARISH POSTBAG

*Dear Reverend,*

*I know you're getting a lot of stick these days from everyone else, but I'd just like to say that I think you are fantastic! My lovely tea with you and Cherie in the vicarage was a real highlight of my life, and the bird I brought with me (wasn't she a corker, eh?) had a great time as well.*

*No wonder you're so popular, vicar, you're a real gent.*

*Your Number One Fan,*
*Michael Winner,*
*3 Death Wish Crescent.*

**The editor reserves the right to print adulatory letters without cutting a single word. AC**

**Here's a picture of a Winner! The one on the left! A.C.**

## Notices

■ I am delighted to be able to announce that the St Albion's Grammar School is to be closed down.

As you know, I have always been a great admirer of comprehensive schools, and Cherie and I would have loved our own children to go to one. Sadly, though, these schools aren't any good, which is why we had to send all our children to Our Lady Of The League Tables in the nextdoor parish.

I myself never had the benefit of a comprehensive education, and I had to make do with a private school in Scotland. Still, I haven't done too badly! Which just shows that you can overcome all kinds of handicaps in this life! Honestly! "Education, education, education" — sometimes I think it's all people go on about! T.B.

# MAN ON TV SPLITS FROM WIFE

**by Our Entire Staff PHIL SPACE**

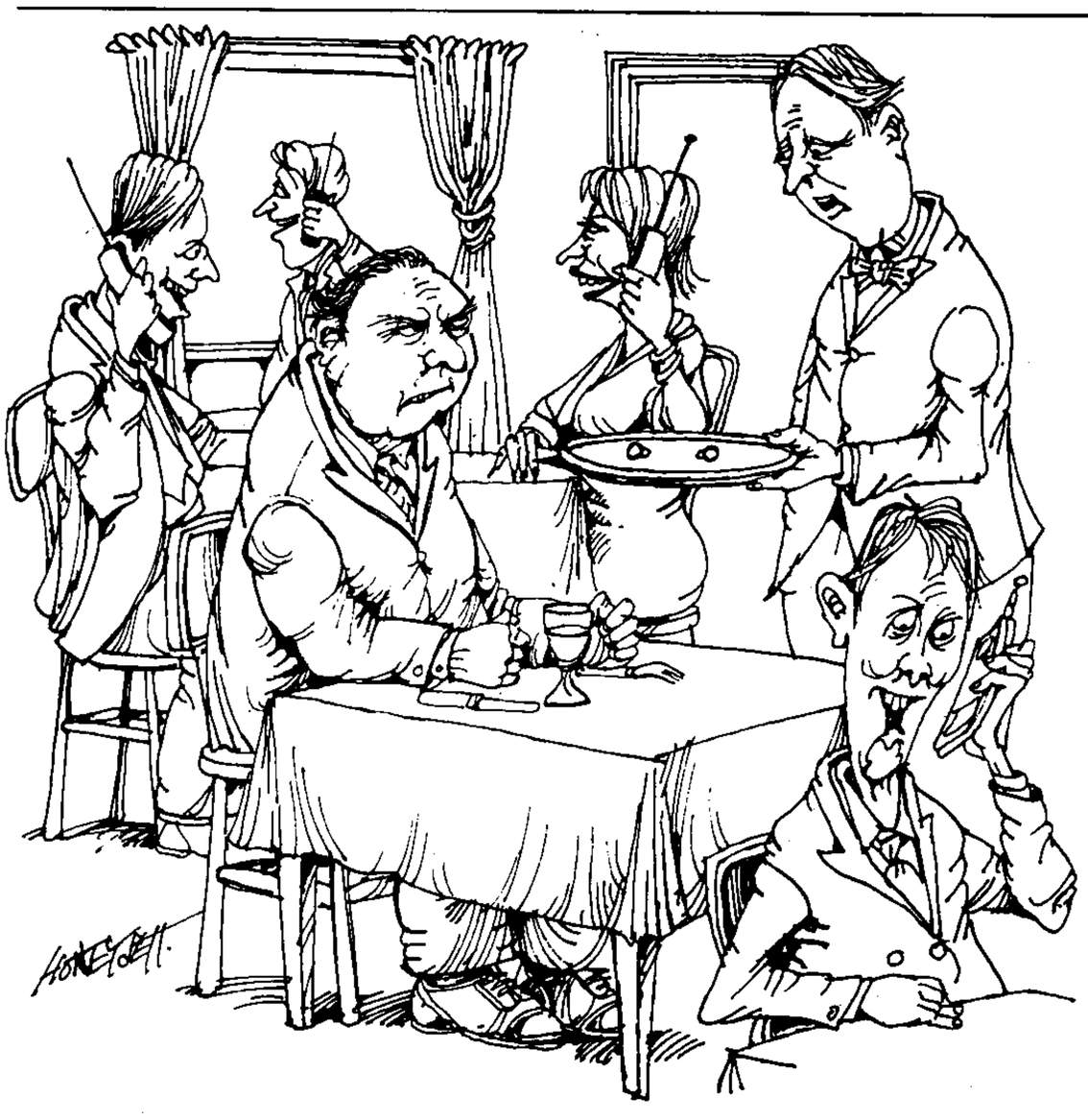
**A MAN on TV with a minor speech impediment is to separate from his wife who has pink hair. "I still love her," says the man on TV.**

*(Reuters)*

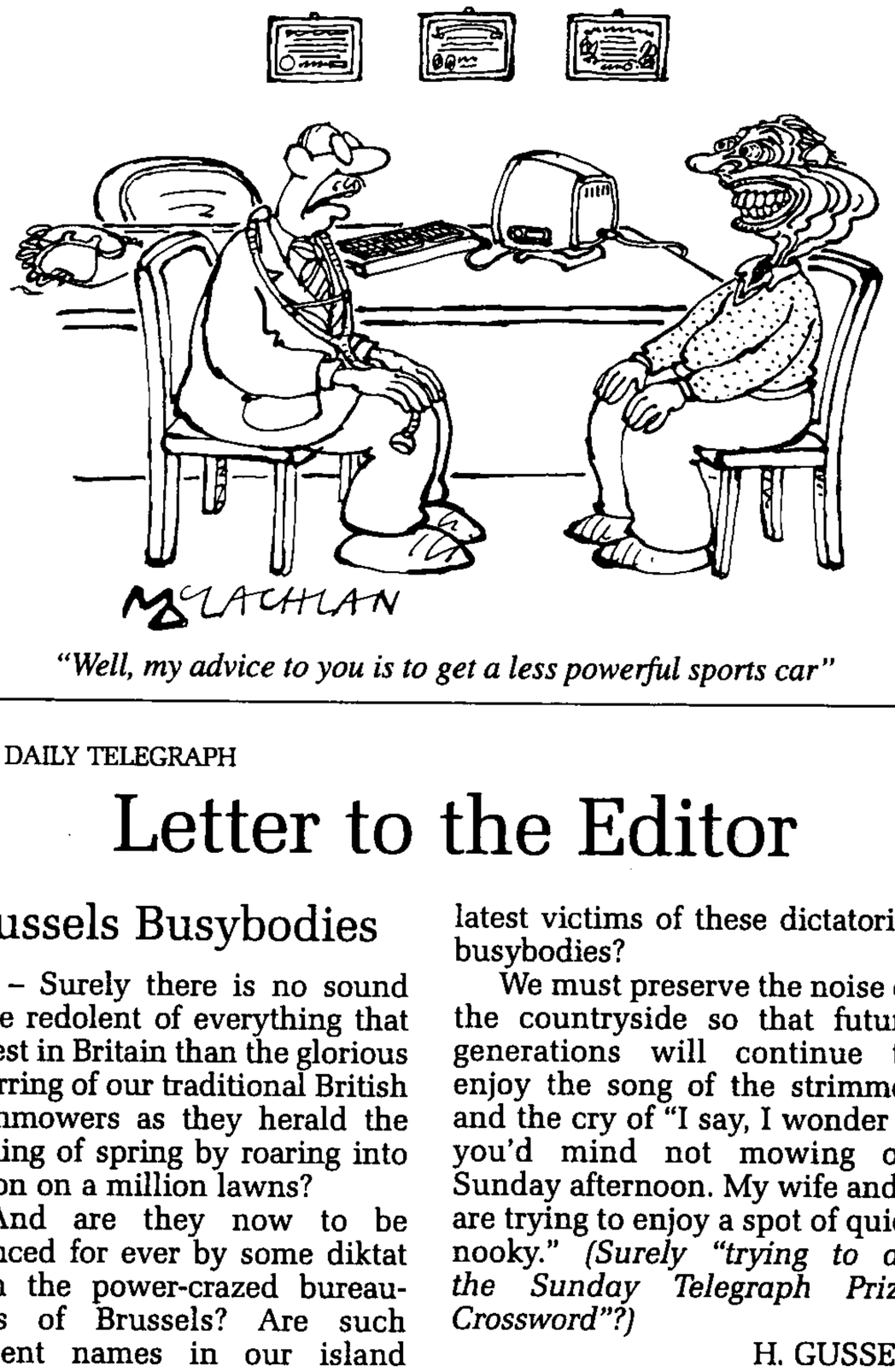
FULL STORY + PIX Pages 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 ● Aren'tchasick of the man on TV? *asks Glenda Lee-Slagg* 10 ● Does splitting up ruin your marriage? *asks Dr Stuttaford* 11 ● Why are we running this rubbish? *asks everyone else* 94

## EARL SPENCER ON CNN

*"William and Harry should be allowed to get on with their lives without people going on television and invading their privacy by spreading hurtful stories like the one I heard about their father never visiting their mother's grave. It makes you sick."*



*"Your earplugs, Sir"*




*"Well, my advice to you is to get a less powerful sports car"*

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

## Letter to the Editor

### Brussels Busybodies

SIR – Surely there is no sound more redolent of everything that is best in Britain than the glorious whirring of our traditional British lawnmowers as they herald the coming of spring by roaring into action on a million lawns?

And are they now to be silenced for ever by some diktat from the power-crazed bureaucrats of Brussels? Are such ancient names in our island history as Suffolk Punch, Flymo, Atco and Honda to become the latest victims of these dictatorial busybodies?

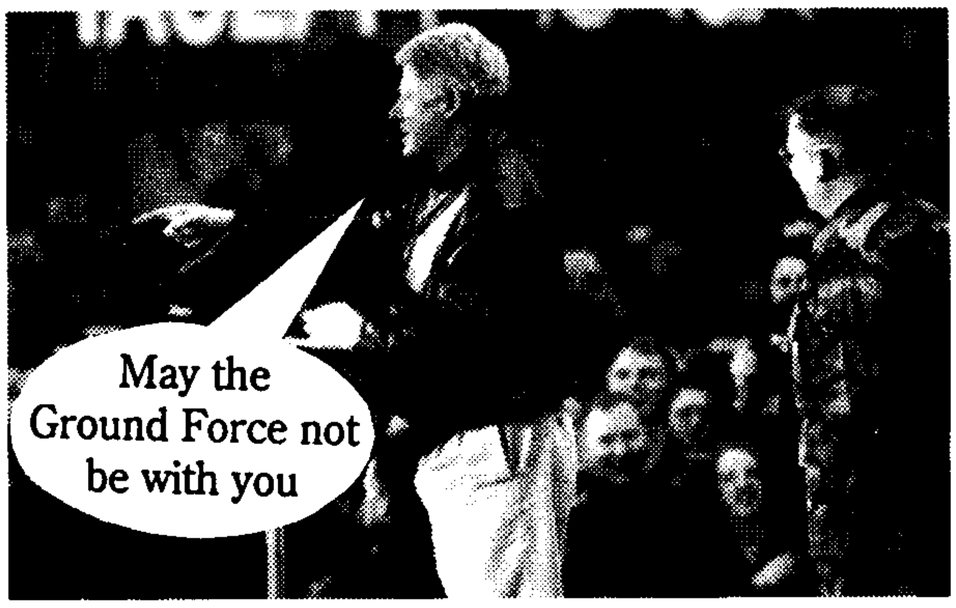
We must preserve the noise of the countryside so that future generations will continue to enjoy the song of the strimmer and the cry of "I say, I wonder if you'd mind not mowing on Sunday afternoon. My wife and I are trying to enjoy a spot of quiet nooky." *(Surely "trying to do the Sunday Telegraph Prize Crossword"?)*

H. GUSSET
Dunmowin, Compo St Heap,
Dorset

ADVERTISEMENT

**NOW CLOSING**

**AIR WARS** 18




**Luke Draftdodger**

*EPIC sci-fi spectacular full of high-tech space-age hardware and overblown special effects. Lacked coherent plot or believable characters. Plenty of explosions, but lasted far too long and had a very unsatisfying ending.*

**Eye Rating:** Unsuitable for adults

# WHY GENETICALLY MODIFIED ROYALTY IS SO DANGEROUS

*by Prince Charles (with help from Jonathon Porridge and Jonathan Dimblebore)*

**TAMPERING with the genetic base of the Royal Family may result in a whole range of disastrous and unforeseen consequences, say experts.**

In recent years scientists have attempted to make the Royal Family more productive by introducing alien genes culled from other species. For example, the introduction of the so-called "Fergienator" gene was made, in the hope of producing a more vivacious, informal, modern breed of Royalty. But the experiment had to be aborted when the Fergie gene went "wild" and hybridised with a number of rogue American strains.

Even more horrific were the results of the notorious Diana experiment, launched in 1981. To begin with, scientists were exultant, claiming huge popularity yields and a surplus of goodwill which they believed would guarantee the survival of the Royal Family well into the next Millennium.

## GM THE QUEEN

But after a few years, the externally introduced gene "ran amok", nearly wiping out the entire Royal Family for ever.

The moral of this tragic saga of thoughtless interference with God's natural scheme is only too obvious. The Royal Family must be allowed to cross-pollinate only with traditional English stock, such as the time-honoured Camelia Parker-

bowlensis, a delightful evergreen shrub which can be seen in the beds at Highgrove throughout the year.

*"I really must protest, have you considered the effect of planting oil seed rape next to lavender?"*

# BT ANNOUNCE NEW NUMBERS

**BRITISH Telecom have angered customers following their announcement that the number £10bn will prefix the word "profit" in their end of year accounts directory. The reason for this, as BT explained, is because their demand for more cash has increased hugely.**

A spokesman for BT commented: "Last year BT added a couple of figures to the number on everyone's telephone bill in order to free up more money for the chairman. Another set of numbers has also altered which involves BT executives' pay cheques. At the end of the month these will add an extra nought and will change from the existing £1,000,000 to £10,000,000.

*(Rotters)*

# POETRY CORNER

**Lines On The Exposure Of A Royal Bosom In The Pages Of The Sun Newspaper**

***by the Poet Laureate Andrew Motion***

A holiday prank gone so badly wrong.
Like so many others.
Yet, not like them, this time.

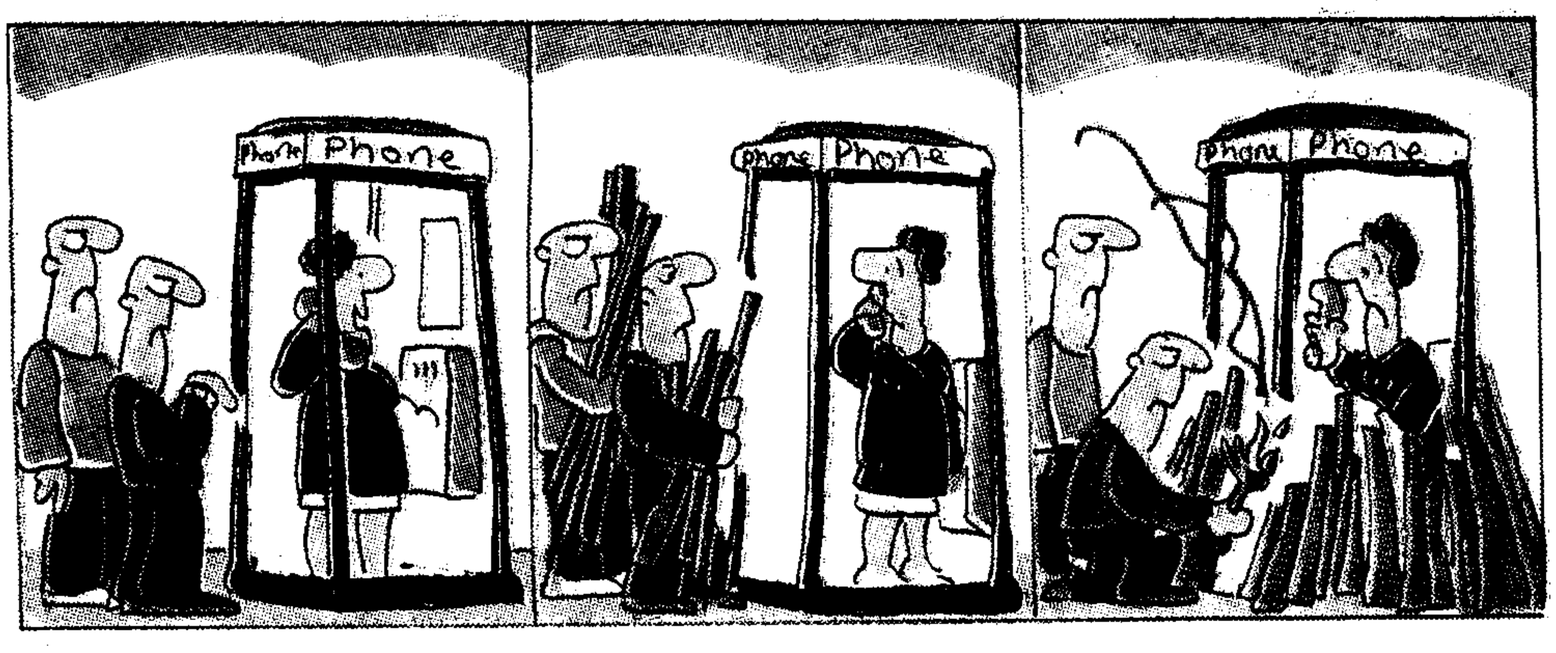
Who could have known
Twelve years ago
That one day the whole world
Would see what only Chris and Kara
Saw that day
So long ago, in Benidorm?

A bit of fun in the sun, it seemed then.
But now
It is anything but fun.
Although it is still in the Sun.
God bless you Ma'am!

Andrew Goingthroughthemotion O.M.

YOBS

HUSBAND



# POLLY FILLER

IT's only 9am and already I'm feeling irritable. Why the hell did I give up? I'm getting fat, I'm snapping at toddler Charlie, and I'm thinking of leaving the useless Simon for suggesting I give up in the first place.

Worst of all, I can't work. I end up staring at a blank sheet of paper for hours. I've tried everything – hypnosis, aromatherapy, reflexology and shouting abuse at Simon for watching the world Skidoo Championships from Auckland on Sky Sport 7.

And how much sympathy do I get? About as much as Norway scored in the Eurovision Song Contest, ie nul points. *(They got 35. Ed.)*

BUT this time I'm really going to do it. It's official. You read it here first.

From today Polly Filler is going to give up writing about giving up smoking.

I know it's an annoying, anti-social habit which gets up other people's noses.

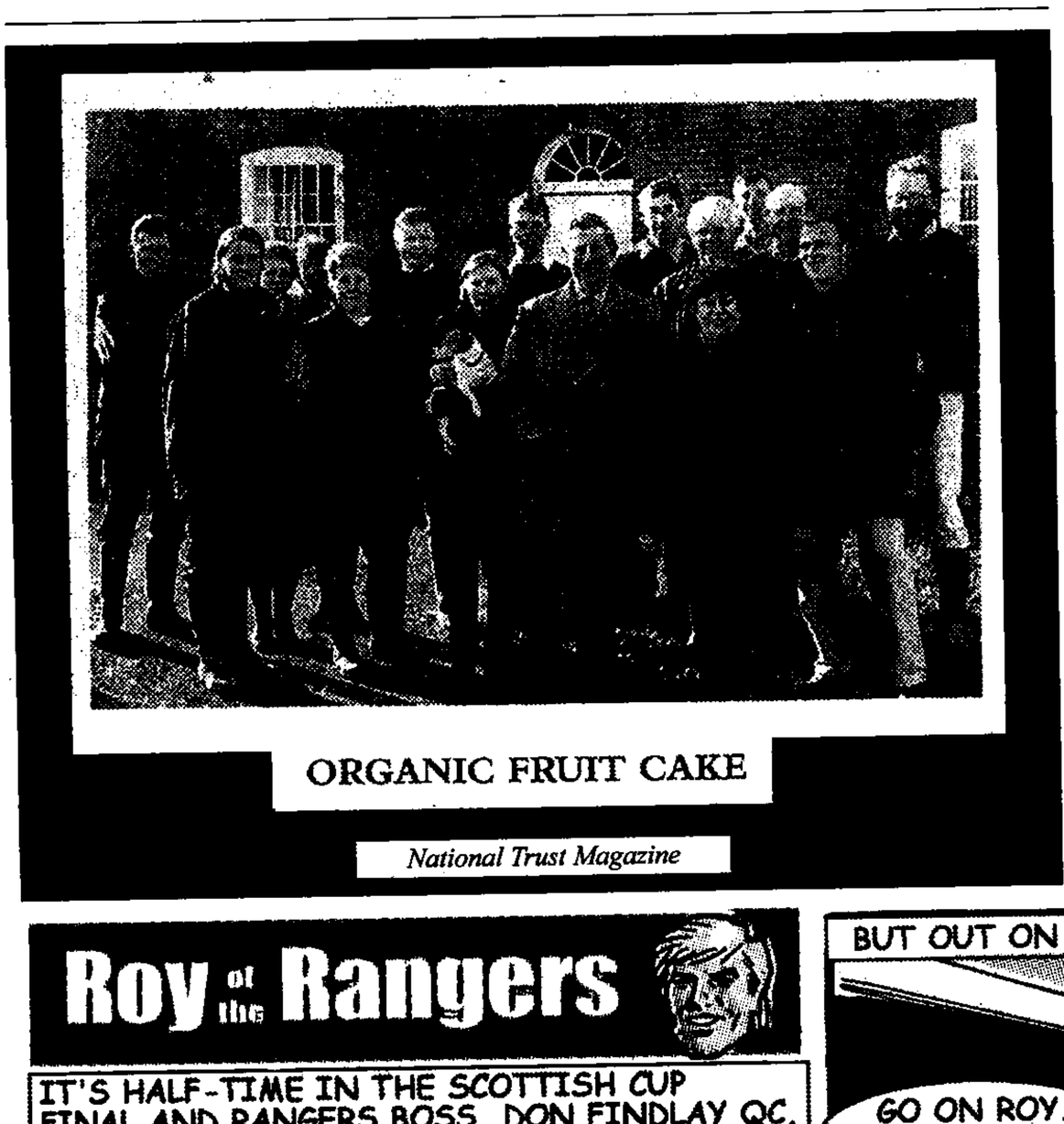
And I know it's weak of me to end up writing forty pieces a day about giving up smoking.

So, from now on I'm going to be really strong.

Just one last piece and that will be it. Surely one won't do any harm?

*© P. Filler*

Next Week: Polly Filler on the trials and tribulations of giving up smoking!



ORGANIC FRUIT CAKE

*National Trust Magazine*

Advertisement

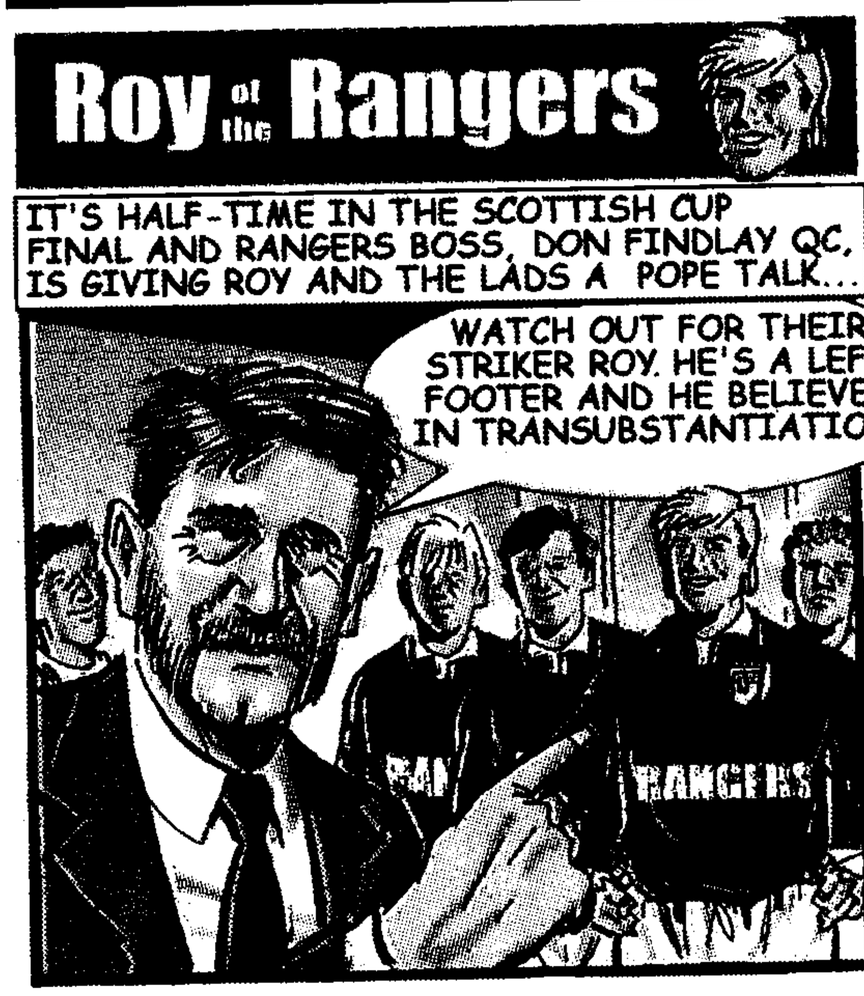
**Men's Summerwear from Racing Gnome**

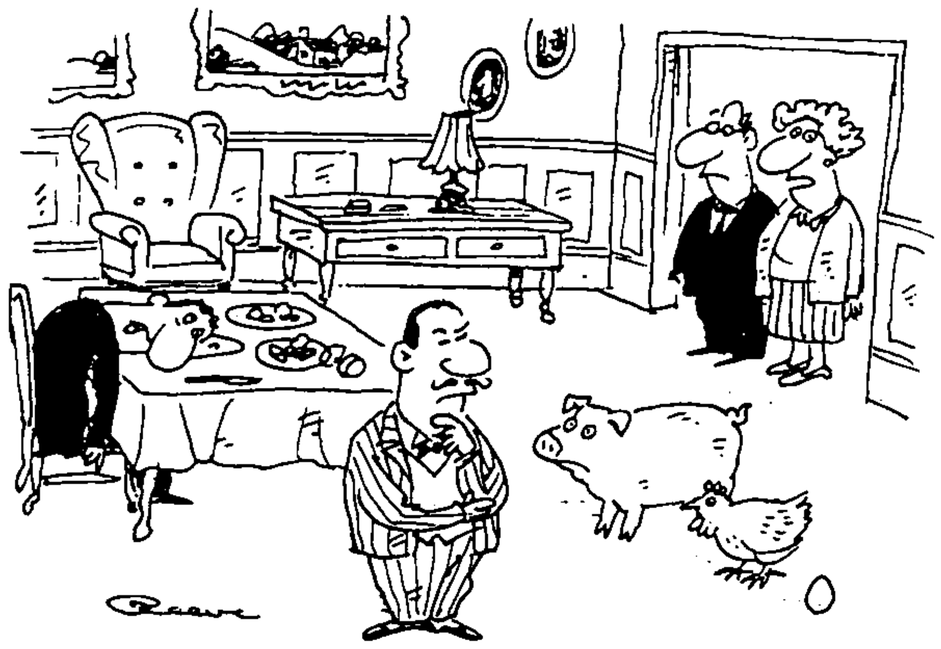
**The Portillo**

Stylish, Spanish-look rainproof kagool, ideal for the man who is going places (£2.99). Plus matching, elastic-wasted, above-the-knee shorts, in figure-hugging Torytex (£6.99). Plus solid, hardwood, all-purpose stick with which to beat William Hague (£32.99).

*Photograph of model taken on the pilgrim route to Santa Miguela di Fotopportuniti*

***"For The Man Who Isn't Wet"***


Roy of the Rangers
IT'S HALF-TIME IN THE SCOTTISH CUP FINAL AND RANGERS BOSS, DON FINDLAY QC, IS GIVING ROY AND THE LADS A POPE TALK...
WATCH OUT FOR THEIR STRIKER ROY. HE'S A LEFT FOOTER AND HE BELIEVES IN TRANSUBSTANTIATION!
BUT OUT ON THE PITCH...
GREAT SECTARIAN SKILLS!
GO ON ROY. SHOOT TO KILL!
COME ON YOU ♫ ORANGES! ♫
BLOW THE WHISTLE REF!
AND ADD IN A PIPE AND A DRUM!
VICTORY! AFTER ONLY 300 YEARS!
PEEP!
NEXT WEEK: THE BOSS GETS HIS MARCHING ORDERS.
COOPER



*"Someone must have sent for Poirot"*

# The Major/Noble Wedding Breakfast Of The Century

*(as exclusively reported in the Daily Hellograph)*

## That Slapper-Up Meal In Full

*Dim Son*

— ❋ —

*Fruity Tart With No Dressing*

*(That's enough. Ed)*

**SERIALISATION**

***They're Calling It The Book Of The Year!***

# What I Did In America

## by Alexander Chancellor

I WAS very excited when my old friend Tina Brown offered me a job on a magazine called The New Yorker. Apparently all I had to do was go out to lunch with a few people and then write about it. And then I would get 100,000 dollars a month. When I arrived in New York I was very surprised to find that the buildings were very tall and the taxis were yellow. When I put this in my first column, Tina said it wasn't good enough, and fired me, which I thought was jolly unfair.

© *A. Chancellor 1999*

# MONEY MATTERS

## with Eye Moneyman Gordon Brown

Dear Gordon,
If you had 400 tons of gold, would you hang on to it or sell it?

**GB writes:**
**The obvious thing to do is to hold on to it for a wee while. But not me! What I'm going to do is to announce in advance that I am going to sell it. This will make sure that its value drops by half. Canny, eh?**

Dear Gordon,
What will you do with the money then?

**GB writes:**
**The obvious thing to do would be to invest what remains in some strong currency like the dollar or the pound. But not me! I'm going to put it all in the euro, where it's bound to lose another half of its value. Canny, eh?**

Dear Gordon,
Aren't you a bit of an idiot?

**GB writes:**
**The obvious answer is yes.**

© The Treasury

Advertisement

NT

The Royal National Theatre presents

SHAKESPEARE'S

**HENRY VI Pt II**

★ *"Explosive"* — **The Times** ★ *"Stunning"* — **The Guardian**
★ *"Sexual Viagra"* — **The Daily Telegraph**

# HEATH'S PRIVATE VIEW

# FINAL HUMILIATION OF FORMER MINISTER

by Our Old Etonian Staff **Charles Moore** (O.E.)

**THERE were heart-rending scenes in the heart of London's fashionable Westminster yesterday, when a team of bailiffs swooped on the £10 million luxury home of disgraced former Conservative Cabinet minister Jonathan Aitken, removing some of the ex-statesman's most precious possessions.**

### Those Possessions In Full

- 1 pair engraved cufflinks, the gift of His Royal Highness Sheikh Randi bin Shifti. *Estimated value £25,000*
- 1 signed photograph of the late President Nixon, inscribed "To Jonathan, the only guy who ever believed that I wasn't lying". *Estimated value £2*
- A selection of rare canes, formerly the property of "Miss Whippee – Norty Boys R Us". *Estimated value 10p*
- 1 wine glass, as emptied over the owner's head by TV-am's own Anna Ford. *Estimated value 25p*
- 10,000 items of personal memorabilia, including private letters from various aggrieved ladies, all ending "You bastard".

But the biggest blow of all for the man whom Mrs Thatcher once regarded as her natural successor was the bailiff's confiscation of his most prized possession of all – the jewel-encrusted "Sword of Truth", which hung over his drawing room mantelpiece, and which had been handed down to him as a cherished heirloom by his grandfather Lord Beavercrook.

A weeping Aitken told me, "They've not only taken the sword, but also the Trusty Shield of British Fairplay, which I had relied on to keep me out of prison.

"Now they have gone, I will have no alternative but to pay my debt to society, or rather not, since I have put the house in my wife's name."

The bailiffs, however, described the sword and shield as "worthless".

# WAR CRIMINAL INDICTED

by Our Media Staff
**Sophie Rees-Mogg**

**THE hated leader of the evil Sun regime, Davidov Yellandovic, has been formally charged with circulation war crimes.**

An unrepentant Yellandovic said "I was only obeying orders from Rupert Murdoch", and made it clear that the indictment will make no difference to his conduct in the war.

"I will stop at nothing to increase the Sun's territory," he said.

He later backed down and said that he would happily surrender to the allied forces of the Royal Family and the general public. He even agreed to a monitoring force run by the PCC to supervise the return of other stories to the Sun, "possibly including the crisis in the Balkans".

*(Reuters)*

IRISH TIMES

# Nation Rocked By "Kiss And Tell" Revelations

*by Our Long-Running Affairs Staff* ***Conor Scruise O'Brien***

A MIDDLE-aged Dublin woman last night admitted a long-running relationship with one of the most legendary names in Irish history.

"It began 20 years ago," said Ms Terry Keane, "when I first kissed the Blarney Stone."

"Blarney was sexy and funny and wild and powerful, which is a real turn-on for us girls.

**Very Keane**

Ever since that first kiss I have been talking complete rubbish and selling it to newspapers for large sums of money."

Charlie Whohe, former Teacosy, is 98.

# PCC Ruling

**News International would like to apologise for *not* publishing the following stories in the Sun and the News of the World last week. We now realise that these stories were clearly in the public interest and national role models like Elisabeth, Rupert and Lachlan should have been put on the front page of our newspapers.**

THE Sun
BLONDE SEX BOMB TRAPS MARRIED MEDIA MAN!
NEWS OF THE WORLD
MEDIA LOVE RAT DUMPS MISSUS FOR SEXY STUNNER!
THE Sun
BIG PIX OF MEDIA HEIR'S BRIDE'S TITS INSIDE!

**We regret this error and promise to commit it again whenever the situation arises.**

*R. Murdoch pp Screws International plc*

*Introducing*
## *Margaret Cook*
*the Eye's new Agony Auntchasickofher*

Dear Margaret,

My problem is my ex-wife can't keep quiet about what a bastard I am and how useless I was in bed.

R. Cook, Kosovo

*Dear Robin,*

*Well, you were useless, weren't you, you bastard? Unlike the bloke I'm shacked up with now! Phew, is he hot, or what? Sod off, beardie. It's Gaynor I feel sorry for. Or Glum-nor, more like, with you a-mumblin' and a-fumblin' around in the wee small hours.*

*Marje Cooks*

If you have a problem, do write in strictest confidence to Dr Margaret Cook, the Woman's Journal, and she'll put it all in her column.

*"Your bags went to Manchester!"*

# DIARY

MICHAEL WINNER

The first time I ever met Tony Blair, the lad was good enough to congratulate me on the success of my latest movie. "Congratulations on the success of your latest movie, Michael," he said. I had made "Bloodspattered Virgins 3" on a budget of under £200,000 and it had already grossed £9,500 at the box office after just six months.

I took to Tone immediately. Here, I thought, was a young fellow who could make a go of things. Very open. Knew his own mind. Wouldn't balk at zapping a young thug in the ribs with a semi-automatic shotgun if it meant saving the life of a helpless old lady. Yes, this was someone I would consider voting for.

"I have been considering voting for you," I announced after an impressive dinner served by the comely Cherie. With that, Tone pulled down my trousers and set to work on my backside without further ado.

"Yes," I said, surveying his truly exceptional work with a hand-mirror, "You have my vote, Tone!"

Tone positively lit up. His face was a picture. I knew then that he would make a most impressive job of serving me as Prime Minister.

Far more impressive than Johnny Major, for instance. I had once put my head round the door of Number 10 to ask Johnny to secure me a permanent parking bay in the posh area of Kensington where I choose to reside. "No can do, Michael," he said, muttering something about the relevant authorities. Didn't even have the common courtesy to mention the outstanding success of my latest movie. Or the selfless unpublicised work I do on behalf of my own charity, The Michael Winner Bloodsplattered Policemen's Trust. Not my kind of guy. A shilly-shallyer. Didn't know his own mind. Not someone I would ever vote for.

Winston Churchill was scarcely more impressive. "Winny," I remember observing to him over an unappetising meal, sloppily served by his lady wife Clementine, "you missed a trick with the 2nd World War. That whole Dunkirk business was a total cock-up. What on earth can you have been thinking of? And as for that so-called Battle of Britain! Oh dear oh dear oh dear! Shambles from start to finish! If you'd asked my advice, I'd've told you to send in my good friends Charlie Bronson and Marlon Brando to shoot them all to pieces in a thrilling night raid. But be a poppet and pass the cigars, dear, and then we'll say no more about it."

Winnie was just about to offer his excuses when I spotted a smear on my wine-glass. I was frankly flabbergasted. "Waitress!" I bellowed jovially, as Clementine shuffled in. "This glass is an absolute disgrace! How bloody dare you?! I've not been treated like this by a Prime Minister before! Do you know who I am?"

My most recent movie represents a departure. It is a highly entertaining comedy, "Corpses Galore!", in which the hero, played by international star Gareth Hunt, blasts over fifty strangers straight through the eyes with a pump-action handgun in a fit of pique – and finally wins his girl, played by delicious superstar Kara Noble! A charming tale with an old-fashioned flavour, beautifully told on a budget that came in at well under £49,000 and has already grossed something over £4,200 at the box office.

We wanted our post-première "do" to be a night to remember, so I had them cordon off the whole of the upstairs of The Leicester Square McDonald's with two medium-sized balls of red string, and then it was Diet Cokes and Egg McMuffins all round in the company of superstar guests including international ex-newsreader Martyn Lewis and bubbly vivacious chanteuse Anita Harris.

I was allowing the bash to be shared with my charity, the Bloodspattered Policemen's Trust, so I sent a message to young William Hague to be present. "I think it would be a most suitable occasion to erect a blue plaque to a policeman who was murdered to death by trigger-happy hooligans in Leicester Square within the last year," I told my aide-de-camp.

"B-b-but there hasn't been a policeman killed in Leicester Square in the last year," he mumbled.

"Then get me one," I replied.

At the ceremony, during which guests were asked to kneel for five minutes while I dutifully acknowledged them with a wave my good friend Jack Nicholson once taught me, I called over young Willy Hague and asked him a question I always ask office juniors.

"On a scale of one to ten," I said, "how happy have you been in the last year?"

"Eight," he replied, cautiously.

"Well, this makes it four," I chuckled, instructing my delightful chauffeur to give him a sharp punch to the stomach. I can't tell you his reply, because it was a private ceremony. But the lad's got to learn if he wants to make it to Number 10. As I once said to Ali Douglas-Home when he was in power, "You'll not be getting my vote, dear, until you sharpen up your act. Those petit-fours were an absolute disgrace! Do you know who I am?"

I've just popped over to Milan to take a look at the freshly-restored "Last Supper" by Leo da Vinci. What a disgrace! If that's what the caterer chose to serve, small wonder it was the Last Supper. It defeats me how he thought he could get away with a few loaves of bread, a couple of bottles of vino and the odd fish at a posh sit-down dinner for thirteen. And where was the tablecloth, may I ask? If it had been me rather than my old friend Jesus shelling out for the binge, I'd have taken Mein Host to one side and given him a thorough dressing-down. "Call this a supper?" I'd have said. "It's more like a motorway snack! You've not heard the last of this, fellow-my-lad! Do you know who I am?"

A LOT OF AMBITIOUS YOUNG ACTRESSES GAIN PROMINENCE IN A CERTAIN AREA...
THEN ONCE THEY'RE ESTABLISHED WITH A SUCCESSFUL CAREER THEY REBEL AGAINST WHAT THEY'RE FAMOUS FOR...
IT'S SO NAIVE.
THEY THINK THEY CAN THROW AWAY AND DISCARD THE VERY THINGS THAT MADE THEM BIG IN THE FIRST PLACE.
PAMELA ANDERSON TO HAVE BREAST IMPLANTS REMOVED
SILLY GIRL. THAT'S HER OFF MY PARTY "A" LIST...

# Literary Review

## Scotch Miss

**Everything You Need**
A.L. Kennedy
*(Cape, £16.99)*

ANYONE who fancies setting a university finals paper in *Mysteries of Modern Literature* could start by posing the question: "Account for the reputation of A.L. Kennedy."

In the six years since she swept into the frame as a "Best of British Young Novelist" — anyone remember them? — Miss K., Alison, has rapidly transformed herself into the hippest under 40 on the literary block: prizes galore, admiring Sunday supplement profiles, the trumpeted esteem of countless fellow scriveners. "Like no other contemporary writer", gushed Candia McWilliam in a recent *Literary Review*, adding for good measure that she had "the richest pornographic empathy of any female writer working in English today".

The richest *what*? In Ms McWilliam's encomium, or rather in its source, lies something of la Kennedy's huge appeal to impressionable south-of-the-border critics. Being Scottish helps, of course, as does being Scottish *and* talented (unlike the Welshes and co). Being a woman is an enormous plus, especially as the womanhood comes disguised by those austere but somehow tantalising initials. Lots of misty-eyed writing about sex, as well. Put it altogether, in the 200,000 or so words that make up *Everything You Need*, and the result is an item that Cape doesn't seem particularly embarrassed to market as "a work of something approaching genius".

What happens? Not very much, actually. Compared to A.L. in pursuit of her modern masterpiece, Martin Amis looks like a low-key concision expert and Will Self the model of reticent reserve. The setting, for the most part, is a remote island off the Welsh coast, populated by the weird denizens of a literary-cum-spiritual retreat. Among their number is a sparklingly disarranged guy named Nathan Staples (who begins the novel by trying, unsuccessfully, to kill himself) haunted by his long ago desertion of wife and child as well as being deeply ashamed of a professional career as a writer of slash and shag potboilers.

To this deeply unpromising locale comes 19-year-old Mary Lamb *(yes, it's supposed to be symbolic)*, recipient of one of the retreat's writing fellowships, regretting her absence from the elderly gay couple who brought her up after mum took off; from hunky Jonno, whose bedwarming skills have recently come to light; and slightly nervous of the "mentoring" role that bug-eyed Nat is set to undertake. And, well I never (a fact that the proud papa doesn't immediately disclose, natch) *Nathan is her dad!*

Establishing detail having been winched into place — there's also a dog called "Eckless" by the way, but don't let him detain you — everyone simply proses on for the next 400 pages or so: interminable drunken phone calls between Nathan and his jaundiced (literally at one point) London publisher, earnest group discussions about how we all feel about each other, the achingly interest free "stories" that Nathan composes along the way, all interspersed with the drollest typographical high jinks.

A.L. likes *italics*, you see, and when people get really upset and start swearing she likes them to do it in bold — **fuck fuck fuck** like that — and there are even one or two especially elevated sections that come in **BOLD CAPITALS** like this. Lots of giggly horrors, too, culled from Nathan's sado-masochist dreams or a lady resident's memories of having her fingers chewed by a shark. Presumably somebody somewhere imagines this to be cutting-edge stuff. In fact — though don't tell anyone on the books pages — what we have here is simply hipster Murdoch, Iris for the under-40s, in which a collection of over-reflective and terminally garrulous artistic types allow themselves the luxury of a tortured emotion or two.

A.L. can write a bit, of course — the deaths of Bryn and Morgan, the gay couple, and the heavy breathing sessions with Jonno are neatly done — but the creative stuff about the struggle to write (which includes some clunking satire of London literary life) drags like an arthritic Bassethound.

Never mind. Despite being one of those novels that nobody ever finishes (I did, by the way, and wasn't altogether surprised by the passingly redemptive ending), it's a safe bet that *Everything You Need* will be on this year's Booker shortlist. If it wins it will be for the same reason that Graham Swift won three years ago — not because of any particular merit that the book possesses but owing to a general predisposition of sentiment in the author's favour. People *like* A.L. Kennedy. And being the literary equivalent of a polo mint can get you anywhere.

## BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ WHILE it is uncertain precisely what WH Smug will gain from its £185m takeover of Hodder Headline, there are no such doubts in the upper reaches of the publisher's white tower in Euston Road. According to the *Bookseller*, chief executive Tim Hely Hutchinson is personally £3.9m better off, while Headline co-founder Sue Fletcher, now deputy md of Hodder & Stoughton General, made £1.3m.

It could also be something of an early Christmas for the famously frugal Siân Thomas, the third member of the original Headline triumvirate, who was squeezed out by the Grim Hatchetman in 1996. The sizeable share package she held on her departure is worth something like £2m under the terms of Smug's grotesquely-inflated 525p per share offer, and she is thought unlikely to have cashed in her chips already, given Hodder Headline's wildly variable financial performance in recent years.

*"I have given up smoking — this is my mobile phone"*

● STILL at Euston Road, the saga of the touching-up of Grocer Heath's image (see *Eyes* 956 and 957) goes from absurd to absurder.

On the Hodder hardback of *The Course of my Life*, the cover photograph was a flattering monochrome Jane Bown portrait, digitally tweaked to appear in obviously artificial colour.

Now the picture is due for a second outing on the Coronet paperback and, thanks to a miracle of printing technology, it is even less convincing than before. The cheeks are ruddier, the blue eyes more piercing and the overall effect is as if the former PM has been rendered by Andy Warhol in the style of one of his infamous soup tins.

■ READERS of the *How we met* feature in the review section of a recent *Sindy* were treated to a touching account of the great bond between James Herbert and former Hammer horror actress Ingrid Pitt. "For me, a good friend is someone you might see once or twice a year, but each time it feels as though you've just seen them last week," says Herbert.

As the article reveals that the pair have only known each other for two short years, Herbert's index of friendship suggests that he has met his bosom pal four times at most.

What led these two tenuously-connected luvvies to go public with their beautiful friendship? Could it be that both are authors trying desperately to plug their latest books? (Yes, Ed.)

■ THE first novel of Zoe Heller, "newspaper columnist" and Zoe Heller-ophile, has attracted a tide of, er, mixed reviews.

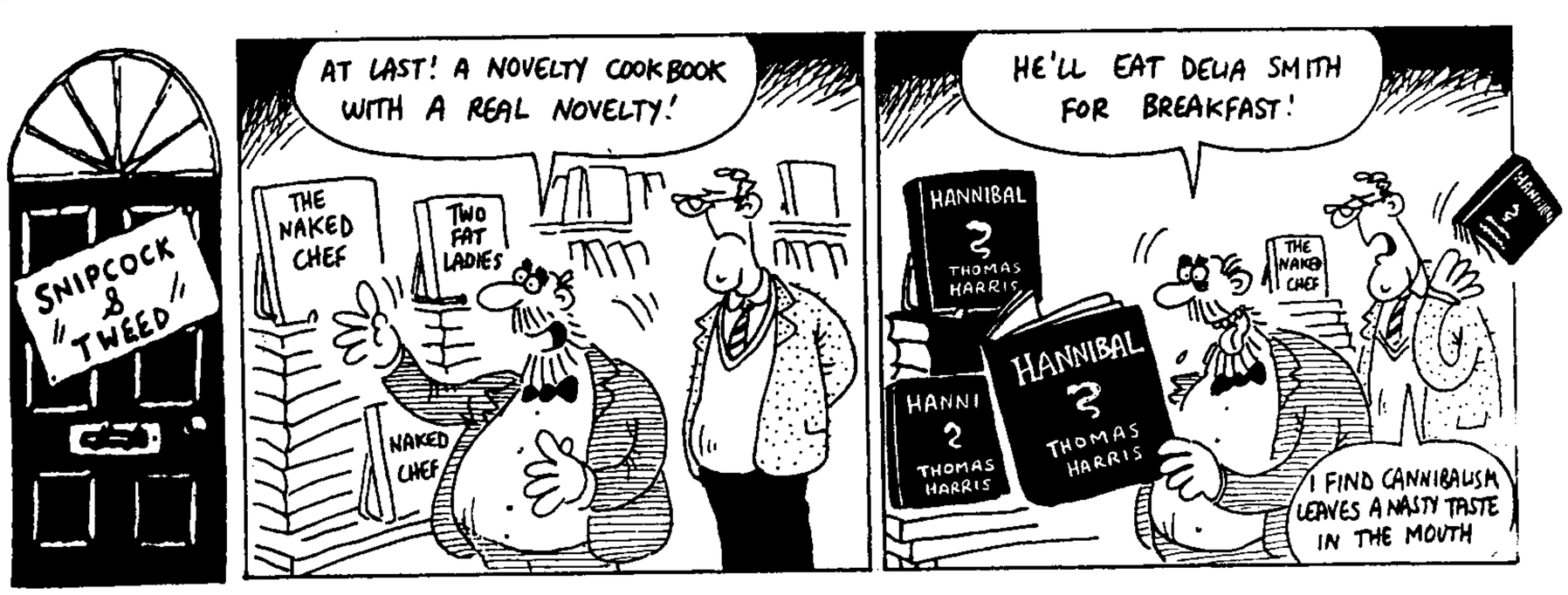
"Extraordinarily familiar"... "merely recycles the old clichés"... "thudding familiarity" (*E. Standard*); "a surfeit of excremental references" (*Irish Times*); "very hard for the reader to care about anybody" (*MoS*). Indeed, in the *Independent*, the reviewer said the book "cannot pass the test as a novel" at all.

Happily it was a different story at the *Observer*, where yet another negative review, this time by Jo Griffiths, was ditched... in preference for a more uplifting puff piece headlined: "Zoe Heller: The Books Interview".

None of this positive copy was in any way influenced by the fact that Heller's sister Lucy is the paper's managing editor. Nor was the decision to give the exciting Zoe feature an eye-catching picture puff alongside the *Observer*'s masthead on the front page.

● To be fair, Robert McCrum's *Observer* books page is awfully positive these days anyway — a rare slagging off for Salman Rushdie's new novel was also dropped recently in favour of a rave review by Hermione Lee. *Much* better.

*'Bookworm'*


SNIPCOCK & TWEED
AT LAST! A NOVELTY COOKBOOK WITH A REAL NOVELTY!
THE NAKED CHEF
TWO FAT LADIES
NAKED CHEF
HE'LL EAT DELIA SMITH FOR BREAKFAST!
HANNIBAL 3 THOMAS HARRIS
HANNI 2 THOMAS HARRIS
THE NAKED CHEF
I FIND CANNIBALISM LEAVES A NASTY TASTE IN THE MOUTH

# IN THE BACK

RECONSTRUCTION

## Kosovo contract race

**THEY'RE OFF! As the war begins to end, the race for reconstruction contracts begins (see past few Eyes) and the department of trade and industry's main worry is that big American companies will get in first like they did in Croatia.**

One operator the DTI should watch out for is Enron, which has already signed an agreement to build a gas-fired power plant north of Zagreb. Power plants were, of course, a particular target for Nato bombing raids over Serbia, so there are plenty of opportunities.

There is some suggestion that rebuilding will not take place in Serbia so long as Slobodan Milosevic is still in power. How firm the allies are on this score remains to be seen, as Chinese and to a lesser extent Russian contractors could take the opportunity to step in first. China is already working on power generation contracts in the region, like the Bushat plant in Albania. Winning construction work in Serbia might be an attractive form of revenge for the embassy bombing. Russia already had some work refurbishing power plants in Serbia before the war. There's now plenty more refurbishing to be done.

Meanwhile Greek Telecommunications company OTE and Italian phone giant STET will be holding their breath. Just before peace proposals began to gain ground Nato, running out of cigarette factories to bomb, announced that it believed the Serbian telephone system was part of the "command and control" apparatus of the Serbian military, and consequently a legitimate target.

However, Serbian Telecom (PTT) is in fact privatised. STET and OTE bought a 49 percent share of the system in 1997. While peace may save their investment, there is always the possibility that Nato planes will destroy some of it while they carry on bombing for a few victory laps. Readers who feel sorry for the firms should know that the privatisation probably kept Slobodan in power. The half a billion pound windfall he bagged by the sell-off was enough to pay overdue wages for civil servants and bills for Russian gas and chinese oil. Settling these accounts stopped his party being routed in that year's elections.

BULLYING AT WORK

## Union bashing

**THERE is concern among northern members of the Transport & General Workers' Union (TGWU) that the equalities officer to whom members must turn for help in dealing with bullying and harassment at work has been found guilty of constructive dismissal amid allegations of, er, bullying and harassment.**

Three months ago an employment tribunal in Liverpool found that Debbie Williams had been unfairly driven from her job at Merseyside Welfare Rights Resource Centre, where she had worked for 14 years. She had lodged a formal grievance against Muriel Mayor — both chair of the centre's management committee and the TGWU's north-west equality officer — some time after things turned sour for her on her return to work after having a baby.

Among her concerns about the reorganisation were allegations that she had been bullied and harassed by Ms Mayor. But far from her complaints being handled according to agreed procedures, management, according to the tribunal, behaved in a 'far from satisfactory way'.

In its damning ruling, the three strong panel said: "Cases like this, involving organisations of a charitable nature, cause us great concern... Those who become involved by way of acting on a management committee must be well motivated, well meaning and sincere in their objectives to help others. Regrettably, however, it has to be said that in many instances this appears not always to make them so considerate in dealing with their employees and volunteers for whom they are ultimately responsible... Our finding is that the applicant was subjected by Ms Mayor to a course of conduct which constituted a breach of contract."

Brian Dawson, TGWU's regional officer, confirmed the matter was being investigated, but said the tribunal had not found Ms Mayor guilty of bullying and harassment. "I have read it in full and nowhere in the ruling does it conclude that," he said.

Not in such blunt speech, maybe. But it does say that:

- There were numerous examples of friction and disagreement between the two women.
- Miss Williams' scenario was "credible" and her witnesses "believable", whereas the centre's witnesses "if not evasive, then can be described as being very careful with their answers".
- That the complaint could not be dismissed by the centre's assertion that Ms Mayor's style was to be "forthright, direct and to speak her mind forcefully".

Clearly the only kind of language Mr Dawson understands.

GOVERNMENT WASTE

## IT and miss... again

**WATCHING Labour's NHS information technology (IT) strategy fail to bits is like seeing a slow-motion replay of previous computing disasters.**

"For the first time, information technology in the NHS will be geared towards helping doctors, nurses and other health professionals," health secretary Frank Dobson burbled last year announcing a £1bn modernisation fund. The trouble is that Dobbo doesn't know what he's talking about; and his ignorance, coupled with "new" Labour's love of big companies, means that yet again Whitehall has produced an IT policy designed to hand over maximum cash to suppliers in return for systems that don't work.

Central to current plans is "NHSNet", a computer network supposedly allowing secure electronic communication between doctors and hospitals, or doctors and health authorities. However, as the national audit office (NAO) concludes in its latest review: "We were unable to identify objectives for the NHS-Wide Networking Project as a whole in the business case". What objectives do exist, it adds, are meaningless: "These objectives do not make clear what the project is expected to achieve and do not provide anything against which progress can be judged."

The whole point of the internet is that it grows from the bottom up. As long as everyone sticks to some basic communication standards, connections can be made in a variety of ways and through existing hardware. But the rigid bureaucrats of the NHS can't deal with this kind of free association. It is also anathema to "new" Labour ministers, who are obsessed with central control, and goes against their instinct to "do deals" with big companies. So, instead of hooking doctors and hospitals up to the net, they are spending £150m on a specialised "intranet" for NHS use only.

BT and its associates, with a captive market, install their own equipment into GPs' surgeries rather than letting doctors use their existing equipment. As a result, the NAO reveals, only 10 percent of computerised GPs have linked up to NHSNet, making the target of 100 percent by 2000 highly implausible.

BT and the government claim that an NHS-only intranet is necessary to protect the security of patients' records and so forth. Strangely, this problem hasn't bothered the banks, who deal over the "information superhighway" using encryption. Even more strangely, NHSNet hasn't yet been able to offer security.

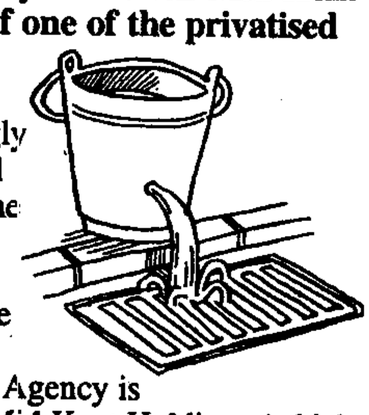
Worse, those doctors and hospitals which are linked have been quickly disillusioned by the high running costs of the slow-moving mail system. Many still prefer to use courier bikes or the post. In the words of an Exeter doctor, Dr Adrian Midgely: "NHSNet sucks. It is too expensive and less secure than internet-based alternatives. It is typical of big NHS IT projects."

Still, the government has guaranteed payments to the suppliers based on a set amount of electronic traffic on the system, regardless of whether that is reached or not. So BT can look forward to increasing its already record profits, at the expense of the long-suffering NHS.

WATER WORLD

## Expanding waste line

**AMID great embarrassment Robert Leigh, chair of the company that owns Mid Kent Water, has fallen foul of one of the privatised industry regulators.**



His East Sussex home is one of 12 in a charmingly converted Victorian model farm complex that for some time has been discharging nasty waste into the River Medway, upsetting wildlife and other residents.

Now the Environment Agency is on the case. The chair of Mid Kent Holdings (which also owns Halcrow Water Services, "a centre of excellence for water engineering and design") and the 11 other home-owners at the Hartfield farm development have been given 90 days to come up with a clean-up plan or face court action.

Mr Leigh told the *Eye* that an ageing sewerage system used by the homes was leaking. Residents met last week and are now considering linking up to the mains drainage system. He said he was not responsible for the development and neither was the leak on his share of the complex. "I like *Private Eye,*" he said, "and I would point out that I have only been non-executive chairman since last July. I am not a fat-cat boss of a privatised utility and neither am I sitting on a large estate."

True. Mid Kent Holdings pays him a mere £40,000 a year for his part-time chairman's duties — peanuts by private utility standards.

Mid Kent Water, anxious to promote an eco-friendly image, said: "Robert Leigh's home is not in Mid Kent water area. We have nothing to say about a private matter that he is dealing with effectively and as quickly as possible."

Just as well he is: for though his home is not in Mid Kent's area, upstream in Sussex it is polluting the Medway, a major source of supply for the privatised company.

■ **YORKSHIRE WATER — recent six-monthly profits up by 7.8 percent to £221.6m — is so proud of its record and reputation it is... changing its name.**

Announcing the profits on 1 June, it revealed that henceforth it is to be known as Kelda Group. Still, nothing else changes. Environmentalists and anglers have accused the Environment Agency of bailing out the company by allowing Yorkshire Water as was to continue taking water from the rivers Wharfe, Ure and Ouse for another five years — even though abstraction started as an "emergency" reaction to the drought (*Eye* 965). Environmentalists claim the fish population of the Wharfe has halved since Yorkshire Water began raiding the river to supplement its leaking water supplies. A small price to pay for ever-increasing shareholders' dividends, surely?

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

# Asian family values

**EVERYONE was shocked by the death of Ruksana Naz, murdered by her mother and brother because she had become pregnant by her childhood sweetheart.**

Everyone, that is, except for the overworked women's groups and handful of enlightened MPs who for years have been campaigning for greater support for the many Asian girls and women forced into or detained in violent, unloving marriages.

They have called for police to start recognising some of these cases for what they are — crimes of domestic violence and sometimes child abuse. And after Ruksana's death they have again appealed to ministers for concerted government action... only to be told that change must come through community leaders.

The problem is that these "community leaders" are predominantly men who are often anxious to preserve a culture perceived to be under threat — and thus are also often the most hostile to the young women and the groups that support them.

Take the case of Perkash Walia, a 42-year-old mother of two. Hers was not an arranged marriage, but a relationship she had willingly entered with Sohan Lal, a priest at a Hindu temple in Southall, west London — a relationship that soon became violent.

In July 1996, about three weeks after they had split up, he persuaded her to meet him at the temple and then return to his flat. He dragged her in, stabbed her in the neck and thigh and half strangled her. "He was throwing me around like a rag doll," she told the *Eye*. "I thought he was going to kill me."

She was kept in hospital for six days requiring surgery for the deep six-inch gash which severed nerves and muscles in her leg. Only on her release was she interviewed by police — but by then Lal had disappeared. It was just over a year before he was finally arrested back at the King Street temple. Perkash had received reports that he had been seen there and alerted the police.

She said her appeals for help to the temple trustees and community leaders fell on deaf ears. But then she discovered there was little evidence to support the warrant for Lal's arrest. No medical evidence had been taken from the hospital. No forensic evidence had been taken from the flat. There was no witness statement.

When the case eventually came to court at the end of last year, her only independent witness had been deported. Nevertheless Lal was found guilty of wounding with intent to do grievous bodily harm and was sentenced to four years.

According to Perkash and Southall Black sisters, the women's support and campaigning group that helped her prepare the case, Lal's conviction for her serious injuries came in spite of the police and community – not because of them. One of the temple trustees to whom Perkash claims she turned for help was local councillor Rabindara Pathak, who also sits on the local police committee.

He denied to the *Eye* that she had ever approached him and also denied that Lal was a priest at the temple "at the time" — although this was not disputed at court. "She never came to me. This has nothing to do with the temple. They had lived together for many years. This was a personal affair and we have nothing to do with that," he said. Precisely her point.

She is now lodging formal complaints to the Police Complaints Authority. Southall police said it had not received any formal complaint, but if it did it would be thoroughly investigated.

MODPLOD

# Porn cop tale

**AN anonymous tip to the Eye last week about Tony Geraghty — the author facing ludicrous charges under the discredited official secrets act (see last edition) — appears to have come direct from the ministry of defence police, aka Modplod, itself.**

Somebody believed the *Eye* ought to know that Mr Geraghty has also been charged with possessing child pornography from the internet. In fact the author has made no secret of the fact that as a result of a Modplod raid on his Hereford home, he had also been charged with possessing indecent material, apparently found on his computer hard disk.

It is, he says, part of his research for his latest book: a thriller set in the world of contemporary witchcraft. His agent and copy-editor were told about his research into bestiality and incest at the time. "All the material taken from me relates in one way or another to my work as a professional writer. My conscience is clear."

That will be a matter for the court. But if the "tip off" was designed to deflect support for Geraghty over the absurd official secrets charges — the first ever to be brought under section five, designed to silence journalists — then Modplod has it wrong again.

That Mr Geraghty faces a possible two years in prison for publishing in his latest book, *An Irish War*, details about computer surveillance that were already widely known, beggars belief. His book remains on sale with no attempt to censor the "offending" few pages.

Indeed the porn tip simply raises further questions about the powers of the part-privatised, non-accountable agency and its methods. By no stretch of the imagination is the internet material a security matter. But then perhaps Modplod couldn't find anything of genuine national importance at Geraghty's home.

BIWATER

# The exports expert

**TUCKED away on the letters page of the Dorking Advertiser comes news of the latest triumph for Adrian White, plonk merchant, BBC governor and founder chairman of Biwater plc.**

"A Dorking businessman has received a major honour from the City of London," fawns the rag before also listing the five Queen's Awards for Export White has collected, as well as the CBE "in recognition of his services to export". There's even a rare picture of the secretive export-machine accepting his latest gong.

As Eye readers know, the gratitude shown by the City for White's export drive (he's now a Freeman) might not be shared by others.

He's unlikely to receive any awards, for example, from the American House of Representatives' banking committee. After all, its chairman Henry Gonzales revealed in 1992 that a synthetic resin plant set up with the full permission of the UK department of trade back in 1988 by a former subsidiary of Biwater in the Baghdad suburb of Al Taji had been commissioned by the Iraqi Technical Corps for Special Projects, an agency "responsible for Iraq's highest-priority clandestine missile and nuclear programmes" (see Eye 971).

And nor is the RAF likely to cheer the new Freeman: it had to bomb the plant during the recent sorties to destroy Saddam's remaining military sites.

CRIME ON TV

# Prison jerks

**CRIMSON faces at Huntercombe, the Henley prison for young offenders, when one of its inmates made a bid for freedom as the BBC was filming part of its new *Crime Squad* series.**

For an episode on car crime the BBC crew had gone to the prison to look at its unique scheme to deter persistent car thieves — only to find someone at the jail was making the job very easy for potential car thieves.

Parked outside the prison was an unlocked car complete with keys. It was spotted by filmmaker David Wilson, now a professor of criminology but coincidentally once a governor at Huntercombe. He locked the car and somewhat sheepishly handed the keys in to the jail.

A short time later an inmate on an outside working party made his escape bid. On foot and with no ready get-away car he was soon apprehended.

A spokeswoman for the Prison Service said an inquiry into the escape was underway. She said the unlocked car belonged to a member of staff who had inadvertently left his keys in the boot.

Meanwhile at Wandsworth jail in London overzealous staff were insisting that one of the grey-suited VIPs attending the launch of *Going Straight*, a book on reformed characters, part with his pager before entering the jail. "Otherwise, you cannot come into the prison," he was bluntly told. A discreet word with the Wandsworth governor ensured that Martin Narey, the new director-general of the prison service, attended the launch and kept his pager.

HIGH PRINCIPALS

# Square deal surfing?

**BARNSLEY College principal David Eade has already come to the attention of High Principals (*Eye* 971) for trying to set up a trust to avoid paying £20,000 of national insurance contributions on performance bonuses for himself and other senior members of staff.**

Meanwhile a new "investigation" is underway at the college into a whistleblower's allegations about Progress Training Ltd, a company set up by Eade to run the college's franchise operations. The *Eye* put it to the college that Eade approved a £20,000 loan to Asylum, a surfing magazine of dubious educational value, which has since folded. We also asked whether the directors of the company which ran the magazine, Sarah and Chris Nelson, have ever paid it back.

Staff at the college, where the salary-bill was slashed by £2m last year, would be amazed if the inquiry discovered that thousands of pounds of public money have been squandered on a failed business venture. Especially if it turned out that Sarah and Chris Nelson are... David Eade's stepchildren.

Ann Oldroyd, clerk to Barnsley College, told the *Eye* that it would be "totally inapproriate to comment further" at this stage of the investigation and refused to answer any questions about Progress Training. As one of the key recipients of Eade's generous performance bonuses, Oldroyd is presumably hoping her loyalty will be rewarded again.

■ IT isn't often an item leaps out at you from *Council News*, the bulletin of the Further Education Funding Council. But tucked away in issue 53 among dry pieces on "rebasing of allocations" and the "external institutions review group" is a hilarious guide to the anti-sleaze measures to be introduced by the council on the orders of education minister Baroness Blackstone.

In future, according to the guide:

- "College audit committees [are] to have at least one person with relevant financial and/or audit experience."
- Staff should disclose "all expenditure on foreign travel and hospitality in the annual accounts."
- "Each college must review its decision-making process annually and record the review in minutes."

In layman's terms this means that until now colleges could be audited by a bunch of people who knew nothing at all about auditing, their senior staff could spend unaudited money flying all over the world without telling anyone... and principals could do whatever they liked without having to justify a single decision.

# In the City

ONCE again the Virgin PR machine is busy puffing tales of great success. Virgin Atlantic profits soaring. A mobile phone connection to One2One. And once again those same spin merchants stay silent on those parts of the Branson empire which show the same success as the grinning pullover's ballooning exploits.

Take, for example, the much-hyped Virgin cola and Virgin vodka. Please — for far too few drinkers share the Branson taste.

Recently published figures show that sales in the year to January 1998 grew by something over 8 percent to £23m. But costs were such that this growth resulted in £7.2m loss compared with the first ever profit of £117,000 recorded the previous year. This took total losses in three years since the Virgin cola brand was launched to £10.5m.

Perhaps not surprisingly this failure of the forecast success against Coca-Cola and Pepsi resulted in Branson's Canadian partner Cott making its excuses and leaving last year, even though this resulted in writing off £500,000. Meanwhile, having bought out Cott Branson had to inject a further £9.7m into the business. Rather necessary as Virgin Cola had a net cash outflow of more than £10m.

Virgin has also parted company with its partner in Virgin Vodka, distiller William Grant. The joint venture Virgin Spirits ceased trading in March 1998 after losing £4m in less than four years.

The Virgin Spirits directors expressed a lack of satisfaction with its financial performance despite the figures for 1997 showed sales growing by 13 percent to £2.6m and the loss halved to £950,000.

In a rare admission of failure Richard Branson and his co-directors at Virgin Trading, which holds the shares in the vodka venture, accepted that the brand had "not so far achieved the hoped for level of market penetration". In other words Virgin Vodka had flopped. As a result Virgin Trading provided £500,000 against its investment in the accounts to January 1998 which were filed recently.

Virgin Trading has so far accumulated losses approaching £3m and any turnaround will depend on Branson's longterm confidence in Virgin Cola proving his ex-partners wrong. Meanwhile, in normal Branson style other parts of the Virgin empire continue to take the financial strain. Virgin Trading owes other Virgin companies £15m, which with substantial net current liabilities at January 1998 it was not immediately able to repay.

It is this reliance on inter-company lending which concerns those who seek to analyse the Virgin finances. The highly profitable Virgin Atlantic, holidays and retail businesses or Branson's partners having to fund an ever increasing number of new and loss-making ventures such as Virgin Direct, which it is now suggested could lose £100m before it makes money, Virgin Rail, Virgin Music and the drinks businesses.

V2 Music Group, Branson's return to the recording industry, owed other Virgin companies £95m at June 1998. That was after repaying Virgin Music (Holdings) BVI — all roads in the Branson empire end offshore in the Caribbean British Virgin islands or the Channel islands — £16.5m plus £850,000 in interest.

As and when and if the highly profitable airline/hotel/holidays travel group is floated with a suggested £1.2bn price tag, the question will arise as to how easy it will be with the City watching for the bearded one to continue to cross-finance every venture his little heart desires? Which may help explain why Branson continues to show reluctance to join a stock market which is likely to demand much more transparency and much less incestuous inter-company dealing.

Meanwhile the Virgin Vodka and Virgin Cola experiences, like those of Virgin Rail passengers, show that merely putting the grinning Branson face and Virgin brand on a product does not ensure its success.

**WHILE continuing to press his candidacy as London's mayor, Labour MP Ken Livingstone also continues to keep a veil over the finances of Localaction, the company which receives his non-parliamentary earnings.**

**After publicity about this tax efficient way of receiving up to £53,000 a year — Localaction pays the much lower small company corporation tax rate, rather than the 40 percent income tax rate such earnings would otherwise face — the champion of the left chose to cease publishing full accounts for the company.**

**Since the accounts for 1996 Localaction has taken advantage of the legal facility for small companies to publish abbreviated accounts which omit most details of income and profits.**

**Still, it would seem as if capitalism remains beneficial to Red Ken. Profits after tax and expenses for the year to June 1998 were at least £18,000. Doubtless when it comes to the mayoral campaign — should the Labour control freaks let him in — this supporter of open government will be only too happy to provide the details omitted from the Localaction accounts.**

AT THE other end of the Labour spectrum further questions have been raised about the involvement of the former minister for tax avoidance Geoffrey Robinson and his offshore family trust in the affairs of Coventry City soccer club. Tax experts remain unconvinced that the complex arrangements do not suggest that the Inland Revenue could still challenge Robinson's claim that the trust is totally independent of his influence.

As disclosed in the last Eye, the Guernsey Family Robinson's Orion Trust was centrally involved in last year's refinancing exercise whereby Midland Bank, long time Robinson bankers, loaned £10m to the struggling premiership club. This loan enabled Robinson to be repaid a £5m unsecured, interest-free loan he had made before the trust bought into Coventry City.

But Midland only came onboard after an Orion Trust-owned offshore company, Craigavon, had

*"I think it's a Euro-money spider"*

"procured" a guarantee for the £10m from an unnamed bank. Perhaps Credit Suisse, which would appear to have financed Orion Trust's hugely unprofitable investment in the Robinson engineering group TransTec?

However, "in certain circumstances" (unspecified) the £10m loan and a floating charge over the club's assets can be transferred to Craigavon, which previously had guaranteed not only Robinson's repayment but also other loans for another near £5m. So after repaying Robinson his £5m the family trust is still potentially on the hook for double that amount.

Yet despite all this support Craigavon was paid no fee for either guarantee. All it received was the benefit of £76,000 paid by Coventry City to cover its legal costs! Lack of a fee suggests to tax experts that these arrangements lacked commerciality — a test used by the Revenue to indicate whether trustees are independent or whether a benefit has been provided to an offshore trust by an onshore individual. No fee helped Coventry's finances but did not boost those of the family trust for its biggest fan.

Paying the trust's legal costs clearly goes some way to meet that test, but the fact that loss-making Coventry City did not have to pay any arrangement fee for such valuable services could raise Revenue eyebrows even if the argument is that Orion was merely protecting its investment.

AFTER years of losses Guardian Newspapers has finally managed to make a profit — even with the burden of the ailing *Observer*.

For the year to March 1998 the *Guardian/Observer* owners reported not only an operating profit of almost £7m but also a pre-tax profit of £1.2m. This compares with the 1997 losses of more than £11m and losses running back even beyond when the *Observer* was acquired in 1993.

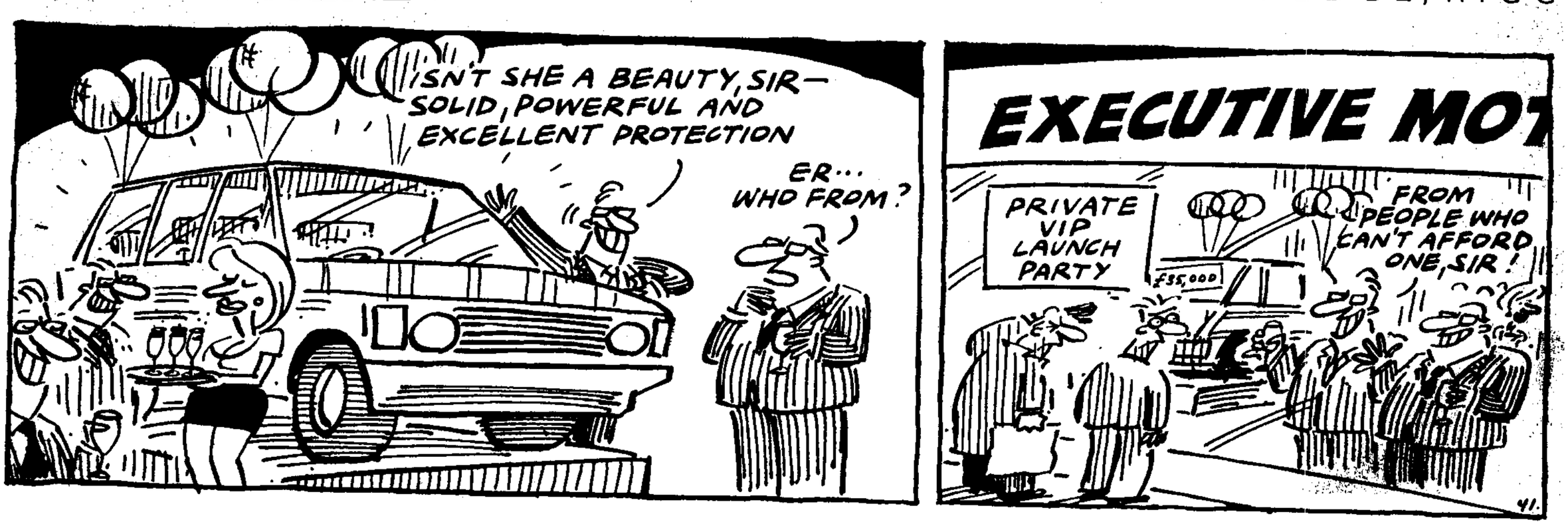
At that stage the *Guardian* alone had amassed losses of £20m. The combined losses now total £74m.

Given that the company had a 1998 turnover of £164m, the new found profitability is derisory even for an organisation for which profit is not supposed to be the name of the game. But then the profits of the *Guardian* have never been what they should be — where they existed at all before last year — given its market position. Which explains why the *Observer* losses have been made a convenient excuse for those who devote their time to criticising the failings of others.

***'Slicker'***

## THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE/RIGG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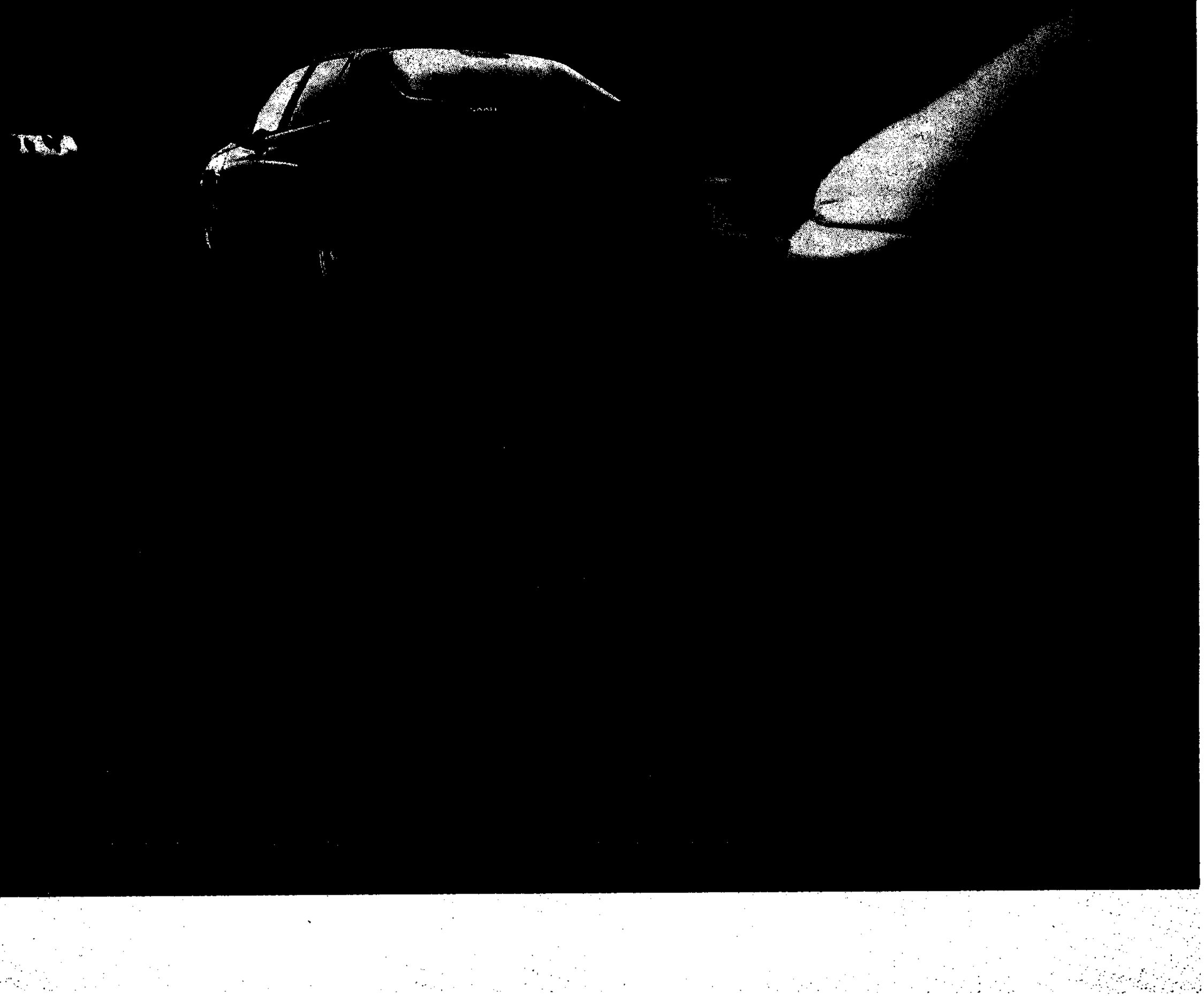

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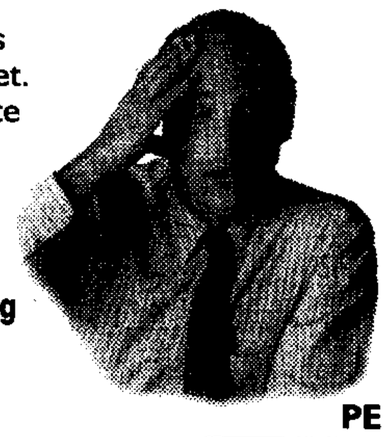

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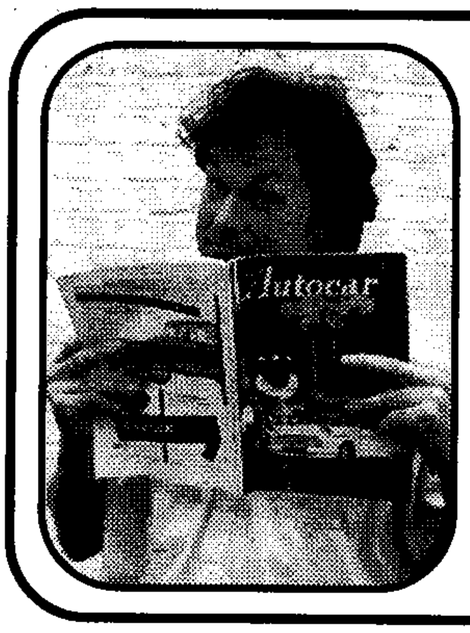

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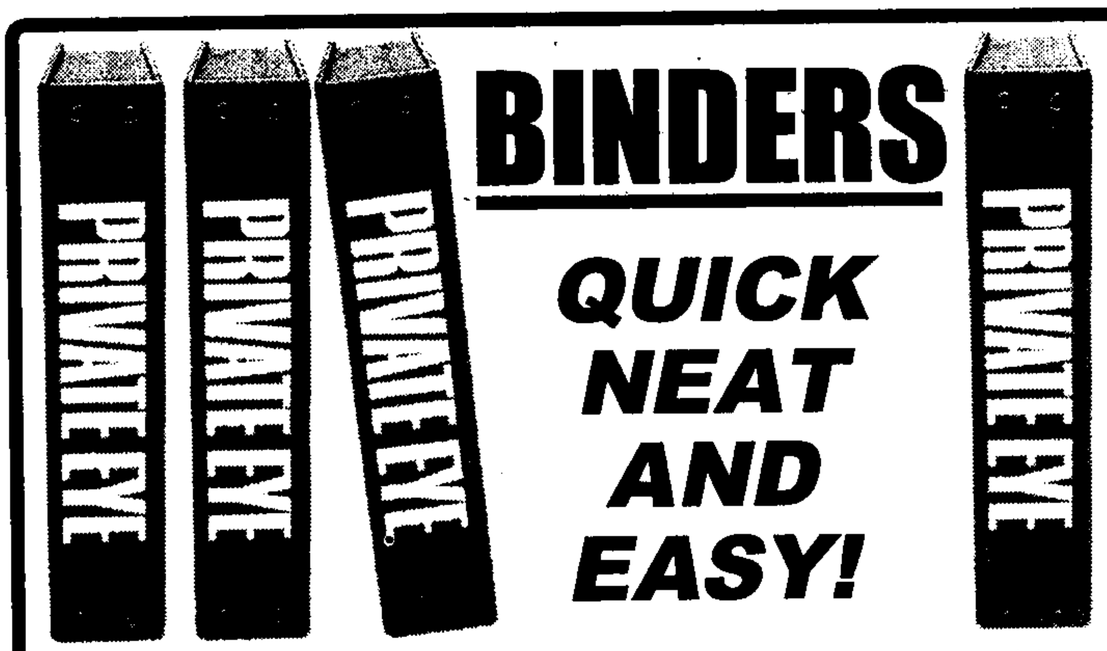


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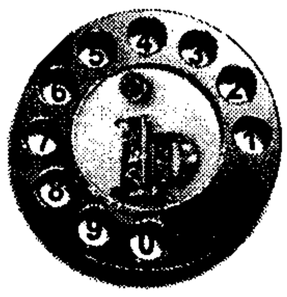

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**www.faxfn.org** – A CORRECTION. Professor Swales may think it is a sad fantasy to believe training is a cure for unemployment but he would never refer to fellow economists as wankers.

**SPEECHWRITING** by Mitch Murray – see page 31...

**CAPITAINE – THINKING OF** Joy. – Sous-Fifre.

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**ASSERTIVE HANDSOME** publisher, M/39, seeks sleek, younger unassertive erotically curious female partner – 07050 210824.

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**SUGAR DADDY** seeks sweetie (50s male would like occasional romantic pursuits). London/South-east. Box 2078.

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**PROFESSIONAL MALE,** 50, N/S, tall, slim, separated, seeks lively female companionship – London area. Photo please. Box 2278.

**MALE, EXPAT, 29,** home in UK in July from South Pacific blue lagoon paradise, WLTM Brooke Shields lookalike, 25 to 30. Contact Paul at office@kfpl.com.sb

**BILL CLINTON** wannabe seeks his Monica – cigar lover not essential. Box 3278.

**I, MALE,** married, 40, fit, celibate, good looking, amusing, tactile, sexy and romantic. You, married (probably), stylish, attractive – looking for a relationship to satisfy all the senses and feel special again. 25/45. Must have time available weekday evenings. Occasional weekends. Send letter and photo to ensure reply. Box 4278.

**LONDON BASED** American professional woman, attractive blonde, seeks intelligent cosmopolitan, unattached, unintimidated man, 55+ for possibly indiscreet relationship. Photo please. Box 4078.

**COTSWOLDS** – tied, attractive woman, 58, intelligent, humorous – seeks likely throughtful iconoclastic correspondent; possibly subsequent meetings. No outdoor types, bears or lotharios. Photo please. Box 3878.

**MARRIED BUT** neglected writer, 41, male – seeks intriguing soul-mate or E-mate. E.Midlands. Box 4178.

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**4 BAD CAPTAINS** sharing a room in Macedonia would like to hear from female correspondents. Photographs appreciated. Box 4378

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